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OF VISHNU



Austin Mann Drake

150



Edith Turner

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The VIAL of VISHNU

THE REPORT OF A CYCLE OF EVENTS FOLLOWING THE
VIOLATION OF THE COMMAND THAT THE VIAL MUST
ALWAYS REMAIN IN THE POSSESSION OF
ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER

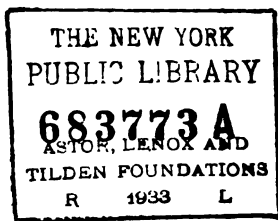
BY
AUSTIN MANN DRAKE

+

CHICAGO
PERCY ROBERTS
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1915

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*For I am the god Vishnu,
The god of Preservation,
Much Good Luck I'll bring to you,
Whatever be your station.
Whosoever giveth me,
As a Friend, or as a Lover,
Keeps for themselves half the Joy,
One-half goes to the other.
Take me, and always keep me,
You must never let me roam,
Your Heart's Desire will come to you,
If you'll only keep me home.*

The **VIAL of VISHNU.**

THE VIAL OF VISHNU.

CHAPTER I

MEETING OF DICK AND JIM



S DICK BEVAN came out of the doorway of a newspaper office in Denver, shortly after noon one day in late August, he was accosted by a man of about his own age.

"Didn't catch on, eh?"

"No, nothing doing," said Dick, gloomily. "You a comp or pressman?"

"Comp. Can operate a machine some, but prefer job or ad work. What are you?"

"I don't know anything about machines, but can handle Gordons or cylinders."

"Looking for work in the job room, eh? Well, there isn't much chance of that. Been long in town?"

"Came in yesterday morning, and have been in all the offices in town, but nothing doing anywhere. I am making for Los Angeles."

"Don't do it. I just came in from the coast, and there is nothing doing out there now, and it will be worse later on. All the prints are making for California this time of

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the year. I suppose you came in from the East?"

"Yes," answered Dick. "Stopped at Kansas City for a few days, and then came on here."

"You'll find it better east. I'm going back to New York."

"I might go back if I had the price of a ticket."

"Ticket!" exclaimed the other. "Ticket for what?"

"Why, a railroad ticket, of course," answered Dick, in surprise.

"Well, believe me, the railroads don't get any of my money for tickets. Either the blind baggage or the unsealed car for me. I've ridden that way from one coast to the other, and expect to get back the same way."

"I never stole a ride in my life," demurred Dick.

"Well, I hope you can always ride on the cushions."

"I guess I can't go much further on this." Dick put his hand into his pocket and pulled out some coins. "About two dollars and sixty cents is the extent of my pile."

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"Two dollars and sixty cents!" exclaimed the other. "Why man, you're a capitalist! That's enough to carry you a thousand miles if you use it right."

This view of life was new to Dick; Raised in a comfortable home, he had learned the printing trade. Not having any expensive habits he always had some money set aside for an emergency. Early in the spring, he had made up his mind to go west, but not having money enough to go through to the coast, had decided to go as far as his money would carry him. In Missouri he had worked for some time, and saved enough money to carry him to Denver, where he had hoped to get work, so he could continue his journey. All of this he told to his new-found friend, who introduced himself as Jim Goodman.

"We had better hook up together, and beat it back east," said Jim. "You've got friends there, and so have I."

"Have you had any dinner?" asked Dick.

"Nope. Didn't have the price. Had sinkers and coffee this morning, though."

"Come on, let's get a feed somewhere."

"Good boy. I know a place where we can get a good dinner for twenty cents each."

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Piloted by Jim, they made their way to a cheap restaurant, where it was the policy of the house to supply in quantity what was lacking in quality or variety.

With the satisfying of the inner man their acquaintanceship ripened into confidences, and persuaded by the discouraging reports that Jim made of the situation further west, Dick decided to follow his advice, and return east.

"Well," said Jim, filling his old briar pipe. "I'm nearly out of tobacco. Do you smoke?"

"Yes, but I've only one cigar."

"A cigar! Suffering cats! Save that for Sunday. A pipe is a lot cheaper, and just as satisfying. We'll have to go down the road and get outside the yards before we can make the blind baggage."

"Blind baggage! What's that?"

"Gee, you are green! Why, the front end of a baggage car. You see there's no door there, and the breakie can't reach you. We've got to jump her just as she pulls out."

"How am I going to do that with my valise?"

"Valise? You carrying a valise with you? Where is it?"

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"At the hotel where I stopped last night. I've another suit of clothes, some shirts, and other things in it."

"Of course," said Jim. "I might have known it. The best thing to do now is to ship it ahead C.O.D. Is your room paid for?"

"Until to-night, yes."

"Let's get the valise and ship it ahead."

After getting the valise at the hotel, they went over to the express office, and shipped it on to Pueblo, charges collect.

"Undoubtedly we can catch on there, and get enough of the long green to pay the charges. Now before we start we want some tobacco. Both kinds, chewing and smoking. I don't chew, do you?"

"No, I don't chew either. So what do we want chewing tobacco for?"

"Because nearly all the breakies chew, and it's handy to have a couple of plugs along with you. It may save us being put off where no passenger trains stop."

"Jim proved himself a good guide. As he had said he had made his way from one coast to the other without paying railroad fare, and he initiated Dick into the mysteries of the game.

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"I always provide myself with a number of time-tables and maps," he explained. "Not only do they give you the time when you can expect a train along, but they also show the stations where they stop, and the distances. For instance, if we can make a train that don't stop only once in sixty miles, we don't have to watch so closely as to which side of the track the station is on. You know when we get to a place where she stops it means getting off and laying low until she's ready to start up again."

"Wouldn't a freight car be better?"

"Yes; sometimes it is. That is, if it's a through car, and you can get in before she's made up for the train. It's slower, though, and you don't enjoy the scenery so well. You can often make several hundred miles that way. I don't think there's much chance on this road but the blind baggage, so we'll try that as a starter."

So down the track they walked until they had passed out of the yards.

"There's a crossing down below," said Jim, "and the train will slack up there some and we can easily jump her. If we have any kind of luck we should make the Springs before morning."

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It was well along in the afternoon and the shadows were beginning to lengthen when the passenger train came into view.

"The train will slacken up about here," said Jim, "and we seem to be the only ones going this way, so we have a good chance. You get on first and I'll follow you."

Dick had had some experience getting on a street car while it was in motion, and felt confident that he could "flip" the front end of the baggage car. But the step of a street car is much lower than the step of a railway car, so his knee hit the lower step instead of his foot. He might have lost his hold on the guard rails had not Jim, following closely behind given him a shove that sent him sprawling on the platform.

"Nearly missed it," remarked Jim. "I guess that was a bad bump you got."

"Yes, it hurts some. The cinders are pretty thick here."

"The cinders aren't so bad," said Jim, as he turned up his coat collar. "I don't think any of the train hands saw us, so I guess we won't get a coal shower. Some of these firemen's idea of a joke is to present us fellows with a load of coal—one hunk at a time. I believe this train only makes one stop be-

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tween here and the Springs. Then she'll have to take water and we'll have to lay low again."

Jim's surmise was right. Only one stop was made. But two other passengers were added to the free list. Dick had better luck jumping this time, though the train was going at much greater speed than before.

As the train pulled into Colorado Springs, the passengers on the front of the baggage car dropped off, one at a time, in the dark.

"We'll look up a newspaper office, and bunk there for the night," advised Jim. "I don't think there's any chance for work here. Too many 'lungers' stop here for that. But we can find a place to bunk all right, and in the morning we'll move on."

"I feel hungry, dirty and tired," said Dick.

"This mountain air gives one an appetite all right. But you are the Shylock of the company."

"We'll watch for a place where we can get the most for our money and then we'll eat."

"Better go over to the newspaper office, wash up and get wise as to the cheapest joint there is in town. Maybe we can make a 'touch' for supper."

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The idea of begging his bread was abhorrent to Dick. Although he had helped out many a fellow workman with the price of a meal or a bed, he had never dreamed that he would ever need help. He had always considered it an act of charity; that there was really no excuse for the other to be in such needy circumstances. But in the last twenty-four hours his views of life had undergone a most radical change.

He remembered now that whenever a fellow workman had asked him for assistance that it was with the manner, not of a mendicant, but as one asking for money due him.

"Don't like the idea?" asked Jim, noting the reluctance with which Dick accepted his suggestion.

"I like to be independent."

"Independent! Who's independent, I'd like to know? One day a man is foreman or proprietor of a shop, and the next day he may be 'carrying the banner.' When I'm flush, I loan to one, and when I'm hard up I borrow of another. That's the free masonry of the trade. You've let the boys have money when you had it, haven't you? Well, you've got it a-coming to you now when you need it."

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Dick concluded that there might be some truth in this philosophy, and when they entered the newspaper office the easy assurance with which Jim inquired the way to the wash room, and made himself at home generally, inspired him with more confidence.

After washing up, Jim sauntered out into the composing room, and after some conversation with one of the operators on a linotype machine, motioned to Dick to follow him.

"Just as I expected. Nothing to do in this town. He gave me two bits and put me wise to where we could feed our faces, so let's go. We'll come back afterward and bunk in the press room."

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CHAPTER II

THE WOOL CAR



THE next morning Dick and Jim waited down the road for the mail train to come along. Once more they rode on the front end of the baggage car, but luck was against them. At the first water tank the train men espied them, stopped the train, and put them off.

"And now," said Jim, "it's a case of counting ties to the next station. But the weather is fine, and the exercise will do us good. I shouldn't be surprised if we didn't have to drill it all the way to Pueblo."

"That's a good long walk."

"About thirty-five miles, I guess. We can make it in two days. I think we had better get some provisions. There's a store over there; let's see what we can get; we can cook them on the road."

At the store they bought some potatoes, coffee, a can of salmon, one of corn beef, and some crackers.

"We can eat the salmon with the crack-

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ers, and then boil the coffee in the can," said Jim.

"What about some sugar and condensed milk?" asked Dick.

"Those are luxuries. We'll have to cut out the luxuries."

They walked on for a couple of miles, when they came to a small creek.

"Here's where we lunch," announced Jim. "I don't think we will find a better place. We'll start a fire and bake the potatoes. Might as well cook all of them, and what we don't eat now, we can eat cold."

Jim showed himself a past master in the art of adapting himself to whatever condition he encountered, and Dick had come to admire him for his quaint philosophy. Apparently he was a born optimist.

"Take the run of the hook," he would say, using a term common in newspaper offices, meaning not trying to avoid a hard or disagreeable task.

"Salmon and crackers first, so we can have something to boil the coffee in."

After drinking the coffee our friends proceeded on their journey. As the shades of evening were falling, they came to a place where a sidetrack had been built out from

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the main road, and on the siding were two box cars.

"I think that will make a pretty good hotel to stay for the night," said Jim, as he pushed open the side door.

Investigation disclosed the fact that one of the cars was empty, while the other was partly loaded with wool. Back from the railroad about a quarter of a mile was a hut, evidently occupied, as lights shone through one of the windows.

"Methinks that will make a nice soft bed, Dick, even if the perfume is pretty strong."

"Yes, but we might be arrested. Hadn't we better keep out?"

"Keep out, nothing. Why should we? It'll be mighty cold before morning, and we are not going to hurt the wool any by sleeping on it."

Emboldened by Jim's experience and assurance, Dick made no further objections. The sacks of wool certainly made a more comfortable bed than the old newspapers in the pressroom of the night before, and Dick, tired with the day's walk, was soon lost in slumber. Jim, more accustomed to the privations of the life of a tramp printer, slept with an ear attuned for any possible danger.

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Furthermore, a feeling of responsibility for his companion had crept over him.

Soon he heard a noise at the door. Listening, he heard voices.

"This'll make a better bunk, pard," said one.

"What's in there?"

"Wool."

"Some more guests for the Shepherd's Hotel," muttered Jim.

Dick was so lost in slumber that he had not heard a sound. Jim was laying beside him at the far end of the car.

The later guests, unaware of their presence, clambered into the car, and sought a place to sleep at the other end.

"Give me the makings," said one.

"Better not smoke in here. Might set the stuff a-fire."

"That's all right. I'll be careful."

After some more urging the first speaker had his way, and soon the car was filled with the odor of cigarette smoke.

"Say, you boobs," spoke up Jim. "You'll have this car a-fire if you don't quit smoking."

"Hello, there! You the landlord here?"

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"No. But you'd better quit smoking. This wool is full of grease."

But in spite of Jim's objections, the new guests continued to smoke. They assured Jim they would be careful.

Jim dozed off, but suddenly he woke up with a start. The car was full of smoke, and in the center was a bright blaze. Even while he stared another sack of wool caught fire.

"Wake up, Dick!" he shouted, at the same time opening the small door at the end of the car. "Climb out of here, quick! The car's on fire!"

Dazed at first, Dick soon came to his senses, and scrambled out of the small door.

"Here, take the coats and the grub, and beat it down the track," ordered Jim, handing the coats and what was left of the provisions out of the small opening, himself following.

"We must run for it now. Those fellows in the hut will be on our trail."

Down the track they sped. Meantime the hoboos in the other end of the car had run off across the plain, having made their escape from the end of the car nearest the hut.

The smouldering wool, fanned by the draft through the full length of the car, was

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soon a sea of flame. The wind was blowing toward the hut, and carried the odor on its wings. The occupants, seeing the flaming car, and the two hoboos running across the plain, immediately started in pursuit, overlooking our two friends.

Looking over his shoulder, Jim saw that they were in no immediate danger of pursuit.

"Keep on running, Dick. They're after the other two, and can't see us; but we'd better put as many ties between that car and ourselves as we can while the going's good."

"The other two! What other two?"

"Why, the two 'boos in the other end of the car. They came in after us, and were smoking and set the car a-fire. I told them not to do it, but they wouldn't listen to me."

"I didn't hear them."

"No; you were pounding your ear for fair, all right."

Dick stopped running. Turning around, he stood in the middle of the track, gazing at the burning wool car as if petrified.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Jim.

"Jim," turning a pale, awed face toward him. "You saved my life."

"Aw, forget it, kid," answered Jim, almost roughly.

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"No, Jim, I'll never forget it."

In silence they trotted on at a slower pace. Finally, when they had put about three miles between them and the scene of the burning car, Jim suggested that they find a place to put up for the night.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed, pointing to some discarded railroad ties piled up near a culvert. "Some one has been here before us evidently, and built a house for us."

The ties had been arranged in such a way as to shut off the wind from three directions, and a rough attempt had been made to roof it over. Gathering some leaves and covering them over with some old newspapers, they made a fairly comfortable bed.

"Not as good as the wool car," remarked Jim, "but much safer."

"I'll never forget that wool car as long as I live, Jim."

"All in a life-time, Dick," was the answer. "I'm going to have a good snooze, now. We won't have to watch to see that no one sets the hotel a-fire." And he pulled his coat up over his head and was soon fast asleep. He was afraid that his companion might become sentimental again.

It was sometime before Dick went to sleep.

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The excitement of their escape from the burning car had not yet worn away. But soon, he, too, was lost to the world. When he opened his eyes the sun was shining through the spaces between the ties, and an odor of coffee floated on the air. Jim had started a fire, and was busily engaged in preparing breakfast.

"Have a plate of mystery, Dick?"

"What's that?"

"Corn beef hash, of course. In scouting around, I found this old iron plate—off some freight car, I guess—cleaned it off, and it makes a pretty good frying-pan. That can of corned beef and what was left of the potatoes makes our hash. Necessity, my boy, is the mother of invention, and there's nothing like a hot breakfast. I've browned the crackers, and we'll have hash on toast."

Roughly cooked as it was, the hash tasted good to Dick, washed down with coffee, sans sugar or milk.

"And now we'll continue on our way," announced Jim. "No dishes to wash, and all the provisions we have to carry is what is left of the coffee and the coffee pot."

"You certainly are cheerful about it."

"Why not? The less you have the less

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you have to worry about. The better you can get around. Things—that's what ties a fellow down and keeps him from seeing the country. Many's the chap I've seen plugging away year after year, afraid to leave town for fear he'd lose his job or some of his property."

"Of course, Jim, that's one way of looking at it. But if everyone traveled around like we are doing now, there wouldn't be any places for us to work in the cities when we got there."

"Gee, I never thought of it that way, either. I guess some of us will have to stay put so the travelers will have somewhere to stop for the night. Maybe sometime I'll settle down. I think it will be on a farm, though."

"How about a country newspaper?"

"Oh, that's all right, if it's the right kind of a burg. Imagine me the editor of a country paper, Dick! The biggest man in town except the doctor and the minister. Do you get it?"

"Well, I can imagine almost anything since I met you. I never thought I would go through the experiences I have had in the last two days."

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"Oh, that's nothing. You'll get used to that if you follow the road much. But I don't think you'll do much tramping. You'll settle down, save your money, and some day be running a newspaper and job office of your own."

"I hope so."

"Sure you will. This is no life for you."

They were two weary young men when they arrived in Pueblo. About noon they had stopped to boil the rest of the coffee, but their first duty in Pueblo was to look up a cheap restaurant. That night they found refuge in the pressroom of one of the newspaper offices, and the next morning there was a chance for work for one of them in the job room.

"You take the job, Dick, and I'll go on east. You can make a stake here so you can ride on the cushions."

"That's good of you, Jim. Here, take this to tide you over," and Dick handed him his last half dollar.

"Thanks, Dick. Good luck to you. Some day I'll see you in your own shop, all right."

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CHAPTER III

FIVE YEARS LATER



SOME three-quarters of a century before the opening of our story, a party of hardy pioneers, traveling in covered wagons drawn by oxen, had pre-empted land on the borders of the Beaver River. The grist and saw mill which was first built, soon became the nucleus of a village. The village grew into a town, and the town became the county seat.

Ripton was the oldest town in the county, more centrally located, geographically, but even with the coming of the railroad, the neighboring city of Grafton, some twenty miles down the river, increased more rapidly in population.

Grafton was nearly ten times as large as the county seat town, boasted of three railroads, high schools, a business college and many factories.

But in spite of all the attractions of the larger city, the county seat was always the

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center of interest during the month of October, for as far back as the younger generation could remember, the county fair at Ripton was the greatest event of the year.

But this year, in addition to the county fair, there was the added attraction of a circus that had pitched its tents near the fair grounds, intending to stay for a few days before moving south for the winter.

With the circus had come the many side shows that travel along the same route, and never in the history of Ripton had the streets presented such an animated and interesting appearance.

When the train from Grafton came in, Dick Bevan, proprietor of the Grafton Independent, had considerable difficulty in making his way through the crowd.

His destination was the office of the Ripton Gazette, the county paper, whose editor, Andrew Comstock, was president of the Washburne County Fair Association.

"Hello, Dick," was the greeting of one of the Comstock boys, as he entered the office. "You won't get any county court news this week," well knowing Dick's custom of visiting the county seat on Mondays.

"No, Bill, I guess not. Ought to be

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plenty of other news, though. Some doings in your town this week."

"You bet. The biggest crowd this town ever saw. You know we are getting out the official program, and dad decided that we had better run a few thousand extra copies. Made sis help out in the binding. By the way, Dick, did you ever meet Amy?"

"No, I never have."

"Oh, Amy, this is Dick Bevan, of the Independent."

Amy Comstock's blue gray eyes had a mischievous twinkle as she smiled an acknowledgment of Dick's off-hand introduction.

"I've seen Mr. Bevan in Grafton often. But I've never been introduced to him."

"I've seen you, too, taking the train. But did not know that you were Miss Comstock. And again, I've never seen you in the office when I have called here."

"I'm seldom in the office on Monday. But today they had to get these programs out."

"It's good of you to help the boys out," commented Dick.

"George can finish them up now. But

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I suppose he is chasing up that circus, or riding around in the new machine with Jack Willis. I've got to go out to the fair grounds now, and help mamma fix up the Domestic Science section."

"Well, if you see that kid tell him he wants to get back to the office. He'll mind you when he won't pay any attention to me."

"All right, Will. I'll tell him I'll not help him out when he wants to go to the foot ball games."

Turning to Dick, Will explained: "Amy can do 'most anything around the office, from writing personals to setting type and feeding the press."

"It's a good thing for you boys that I can," remarked Amy.

As Dick was looking over the program, which Bill had given to him, there was a sound of an automobile horn. Looking out of the office window, Bill espied his brother George in a small runabout with Jack Willis.

"I guess you were right, Amy. And now I suppose he will want you to ride out to the fair grounds with him."

"Well, I won't go, Will. I never did

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like him, and now that he's got this machine, he thinks that he's the whole thing."

Just then George burst into the office. "Oh, Amy, Jack says he wants you to ride out to the fair grounds with him."

"You can tell him that I have another engagement. And you get right back here and help Will out in the office. You know there's a lot of work here today."

"What! Ain't you going?"

"No, You go out and tell him what I told you."

"You did just right, Amy," said Bill, as George went out of the door. "That young blood is getting too fresh for this town."

"He was sore, Amy," said George, as he came back into the office.

"Never you mind whether he was or not. It's up to you to help Will here in the office, and if you don't do it, I'll not help you out when you want to go to the football games. You knew I had to go out to the fair grounds with that basket of jelly."

"Yes, and now you will have to carry it out, when you could have taken it out in the machine."

"I don't care if I had ten baskets, I had

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sooner carry them out than be seen riding in his machine."

Dick unintentionally had overheard this conversation. Turning to Bill he asked, "Is your father out at the fair grounds?"

"He'll be out there now, I guess. He's as busy as a cranberry merchant today."

"Maybe you'll let me carry that basket out for you, Miss Comstock," suggested Dick.

"Are you going out there now?"

"Yes. I just stopped in here first to get a copy of the program. I knew you were printing it."

"Will I see you before you go back, Dick?" shouted Bill, as they were going out of the door.

"Yes. I expect to go back on the late train tonight."

The fair grounds were on the outskirts of the town, about three-quarters of a mile walk from the Gazette office.

"Alice Conrad is your correspondent here, isn't she?" asked Amy.

"Yes. Of course you know her?"

"Oh, yes. We are the best of friends. She went to the Academy in Grafton while I was in Business College there. She often

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helps me in the office. She has quite a 'nose for news' and wants to be a journalist."

"She is the most reliable correspondent we have on our list. I suppose you have noticed that we generally have a full column from Ripton."

"Yes. I watch your paper very closely. I have a number of friends in Grafton, and am down there quite often."

"I hope you will let me know the next time you come down. Where do you stop?"

"At Mrs. Dixon's. Alice and I boarded there, and she always has an extra room."

"Why, is that Ed Dixon's mother?"

"Yes, do you know Ed Dixon?"

"Oh, yes. He has done some legal work for me. When I bought the Independent, he drew up the papers for me."

"Isn't it funny we never met before?"

"It is strange. But I'm glad we have met now."

"How long have you run the Independent?"

"I came to Grafton early in February, in answer to an ad. for a printer, and took charge of the mechanical end. Then when Reynolds died early in the summer, it was

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considerably involved, and I had a chance to buy it pretty cheap."

"I think you are making a better paper of it than Mr. Reynolds ever did."

"It's nice of you to say that. I've really done better than I expected with a semi-weekly, and it is my ambition to make it a daily."

"Papa always says a weekly pays better. It doesn't cost so much to run it."

"That's true; but it does not have the influence a daily has. Then again, in Grafton there are such a large number of factory employees, who don't want to wait until Wednesday and Saturday for the news."

"Do you think that Grafton can support two daily papers, Mr. Bevan?"

"Maybe not. But if I make my paper a daily, I expect to make it the leading paper of the town."

"But could you do that? Papa thinks the News has a strong hold on the people in Grafton."

"I know it will be hard work. But I intend to make a stab at it."

"I wish you success. And I certainly admire your pluck."

Opposite the fair grounds the circus men

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had pitched their tents, flanked on both sides by side shows, merry-go-rounds, and fakirs of various kinds.

"Papa has tickets for the circus tomorrow," said Amy, as they stood for a moment watching the crowd. "But let's go in the grounds and find mamma, and get rid of this jelly. I'm sure you're tired of it."

"Looks like mighty good stuff to me. But I am willing to turn it over to the judges."

Passing through the entrance, they made their way to the building set apart for exhibiting the work of women.

"For land's sake, child, I thought you were never coming. What kept you so long?"

"I was waiting for George to come back. Mamma, this is Mr. Bevan, of the Grafton Independent, and he was good enough to carry the basket of jelly for me."

"I'm right glad to meet you, Mr. Bevan. I've often heard pa and the boys speak of you. You must have lunch with us. I brought out a-plenty, and pa wouldn't like it if you don't."

"I'll be only too glad, Mrs. Comstock.

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And I must see Mr. Comstock and get the news."

"Oh, Amy!" someone called gaily. "Come over here, I want you to help me."

"Amy is going to stay right here and help me," said Mrs. Comstock, decisively. "I've been waiting for her all the morning."

"Miss Amy seems to be in demand," laughed Dick.

"Why, that's your correspondent, Alice Conrad. Don't you know her?"

"I never had the pleasure of meeting her."

"I'll take you over and introduce you. But don't forget you are to have lunch with us."

"I'm not liable to forget that."

After a few moments' chat with Alice, Dick sauntered around the grounds, finally meeting Mr. Comstock. Later they sat down to a jolly meal.

"How long are you going to stay in town, Mr. Bevan?" asked Mrs. Comstock.

"I'm going to gather up all the news I can, and go back tonight on the late train."

"He can come up to the house for supper, can't he, ma?" asked Mr. Comstock.

"Of course he can. I'd be glad to have him."

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"That's very kind of you," said Dick. "But I was going right to the hotel, and write my copy for tomorrow."

"You're coming to the house for supper, and then you can write your copy in the office afterward. I may be able to give you some more news then," insisted Mr. Comstock.

After supper Mr. Comstock and Dick repaired to the Gazette office, while the Comstock boys and Amy spent the evening visiting the side shows near the fair grounds.

Among the attractions was a Hindoo fortune teller. Dressed in a long, flowing robe, with a yellow turban wound around his head, he made an imposing spectacle in the flaring gasoline light. His assistant passed sheets of paper around through the crowd. They were instructed to write their names upon the paper. The sheet was then placed inside of a cylinder, which the Hindoo held in his hand for several minutes while he incanted a prayer in his native tongue. Then the sheet of paper would be taken out of the cylinder, and handed to the one whose name was written thereon. Wonder of wonders! The erstwhile blank sheet of paper was now

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covered with words telling the fortune of the owner!

Amy was very much impressed by this exhibition, and although her brother ridiculed the performance, telling her it was but a piece of trickery, she decided to take a chance while he was not looking.

The sheet of paper that was handed back to her had written on it in peculiarly formed letters:

"This day you will meet your fate. A stranger within your gates will change the course of your life. Much joy after many sorrows." Somewhat awed, yet assuring herself it was but a trick, she slipped the piece of paper in her hand bag.

It was about nine o'clock when Amy and Bill arrived at the newspaper office, and Dick was gathering up his copy preparatory to his return to Grafton.

They all walked down to the depot with Dick, and as he shook hands with Amy, he said: "I must say that Ripton is certainly hospitable to the strangers within its gates."

"A stranger within your gates," thought Amy—almost the same words as were on the sheet of paper she had received from the Hindoo.

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CHAPTER IV

THE VISIT OF THE HINDOO



THE next day after Dick's visit to Ripton Amy Comstock was alone in the office of the Gazette. It was a busy time for everyone. Her father would be at the fair grounds the entire week, her brother Bill was down at the depot to see about some paper that was being unloaded, and George had just left for the fair grounds with the balance of the programs.

She had come to the office early, because she had promised her father to write all the local news and personals, so that he would be free to take care of the reports from the fair grounds.

Amy was quite a rapid type-setter, and on the Gazette all the type was set by hand. She had formed the habit, common in country newspapers, of setting up the type, instead of writing out her copy. She was perched upon a high stool at one of the type cases, glancing occasionally at a note book that was placed on the upper case. She had

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just completed an item about twelve lines in length, and the memorandum in the note book had said: "Richard Bevan, Independent."

It was a peculiar psychological fact that she had headed a number of items, "Strangers within our gates."

As she was about to start on another item she heard the door open, and looked up just as Narisiyada entered the office. Closing the door he made a low salaam, and said:

"Madame, I would purchase some paper."

Amy, somewhat flustered to see the Hindoo, whom she had been unable to banish from her mind since the previous evening, said hurriedly:

"W-w-wait a moment, please."

After washing her hands at the sink in the press room, she came back to where the Hindoo was waiting.

"What kind of paper do you want?"

"I know not the name of it, but I know by the feel."

Amy took him back to a part of the press room where different kinds of paper were piled on the shelves. Sample after sample she showed him, but his answer was always the same, "no, no," with a shake of the head.

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While Amy was looking for another sample, the Hindoo picked up a piece of paper from the floor.

"This is the kind I want. Have you any more like this?"

"Oh, proof paper!" she exclaimed.

"Is that what you call it? I just want a little. That little package will do," pointing to some that Amy held in her hand. "And that is just the size I want. How much for that?"

"Oh, I wouldn't charge you for a little bit like that. You're welcome to it."

"Oh, my dear madame! I couldn't think of that. I would rather pay for it."

Amy, who by this time had recovered her composure, laughingly refused to set any price.

"Oh, very well; then, see, I will give you this. It is the Vial of Vishnu." Drawing from his girdle a bottle of most peculiar appearance.

It was dark blue in color, about three and one-half inches high, including the stopper, which was about one and a half inches high, and formed like a human head. The bottle was harp shaped, with handles. On the front was a peculiar emblem—a trident, with

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the middle prong yellow, and the side ones white, rising out of a water lily. On the handles were some strange hieroglyphics.

"Oh," exclaimed Amy. "What a peculiar bottle!"

"No, no, no. Not a bottle. The Vial of Vishnu—see his sign?" pointing to the emblem on the front. "I give it to you. You must keep it alway. It can be given for love or gratitude, but never sold. It must not leave you without your consent—may bring trouble—perhaps death. With you it means peace and happiness."

Amy was somewhat frightened by the mystic words and manner of the Hindoo, and held the Vial in her hand with some misgivings. Holding it to the light she exclaimed:

"Why, there is something in it!"

"Yes, the fluid I use in telling fortunes. I will show you."

For some time after the Hindoo had gone, Amy felt that she had been transported to the far east. She had carefully put the Vial in her handbag, and resolved to say nothing of the Hindoo's visit. She would not admit to herself that she really believed in what he

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had said, but she had read enough on occult matters, to feel somewhat in awe of this mystic Vial.

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CHAPTER V

THE GRAFTON INDEPENDENT



FRIDAY evening, while Dick Bevan was looking over the exchanges that came to his office, he eagerly scanned over the county fair news in the Ripton Gazette, to make sure that his paper had fully covered it from a news standpoint. Glancing at the local page, his eye caught sight of the following item:

A New Daily Paper.

Among the early visitors to the Fair was Mr. Richard Bevan of the Grafton Independent. Mr. Bevan, it will be remembered, succeeded Mr. Reynolds as proprietor and editor of this publication. Under his management it has become one of the brightest and most fearless newspapers in the state. We are informed on reliable authority that the semi-weekly will soon be issued as a daily. We wish the new venture every success.

"Well," he mused, lighting his pipe.
"Nothing like going away from home to hear the news."

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When Dick had come to Grafton, early in the year, to take charge of the mechanical department of the Independent, he found a printing plant that had considerably run to seed. The type was worn and old-fashioned. Reynolds was an old widower, and cared little about the appearance of himself, or his paper. The newspaper had been in existence a number of years, under various names. Several months before Dick had come to town, its name had been changed to the Independent. It was really the successor of a number of papers that had been born, lived for a while, and then died.

Each of its predecessors had an unexpired subscription list, that had been incorporated into the list of new subscribers. Hardly could an edition be mailed but what there would come back a number of refusals, or notices from the postoffice department to discontinue sending it to certain individuals.

If anyone at that time had told Dick that he would in time be sole editor and proprietor of the Independent, he would have laughed most heartily at the idea.

"This is nothing but a pile of junk," he said to the pressman, Stebbins. "I'll stay the week out, or until he gets another man."

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"That's what the other fellow said," consoled Stebbins. "These two job presses are all right, and the newspaper type is good, but the rest of it is on the bum."

On the evening of the second day Dick had a long talk with Reynolds, and the next day arranged with the typefounders to supply a new series of type for the ads and job work, trading back a quantity of the old material, that had long since seen its best days.

With the improvements thus inaugurated, and a pruning of the subscription list, the Independent was placed on a different basis. It was Dick's suggestion that the paper be issued semi-weekly. Special offers were made to the subscribers, or rather those on the mailing list, and as a result the paper soon had a much better standing.

In the midst of these changes Reynolds died. His estate was considerably involved, and the Independent, never having been considered as a very valuable asset—indeed, some people looked upon it as a liability—was purchased by Dick on what he thought was a very satisfactory basis. The purchase price had about exhausted his capital, which consisted of his savings for the past four years,

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and the small legacy he had received when his father's estate was settled.

He had added many new features, increased the list of out-of-town correspondents, and the Independent was beginning to be recognized as a bright newspaper. The circulation had increased, mostly of course, in the country sections. This had enabled him to get a nice line of advertising from the Grafton merchants who wished to reach the country trade. In fact, it promised to become a well-paying piece of newspaper property.

"A daily!" he mused. "Well, why not? I've done well so far, why shouldn't I do well with a daily?" Alone in the office, his eyes wandered over the establishment. The new cylinder that he had just installed the week before, to replace the old rattle-trap that had done service for so many years, arrested his eye. "Four pages, seven columns to a page. Print one side before noon, and the other after three o'clock. I could do it all right."

How strange it is that apparently insignificant incidents will change the entire course of a human life! A chance remark, partly in jest, had crystalized into a news item, which gained a wide circulation.

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As the days went by, other papers copied the item, and soon Dick could hardly pick up a paper that did not announce that the Grafton Independent would soon enter the field as a daily. When Dick was asked about it, in his visits around the county, he would neither deny or confirm the report, and as a result a vague impression was created that some one with a large amount of money was backing the venture, and that the new daily would be issued the first of the year.

When Dick made his weekly trip to the county seat the Monday following the Fair, the first greeting he received from Bill Comstock was: "Hello, Dick, how's the daily coming?"

"Oh, all right," said Dick, rather uneasily.

"Mr. Bevan," spoke up Amy, "I heard it was to start the first of the year. Is that so."

"Where did you hear that?" asked Dick.

"Really, I don't know who did say so, but I think that would be a good time to start."

Mr. Comstock, who had been listening to this conversation, spoke up just then.

"Take my advice, and stick to the semi-

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weekly, my boy. You're doing well with that now. It costs money to run a daily paper. Remember the story about the man who sold his soul to His Satanic Majesty on the condition that he was to have all the money that he could spend, but he had to spend it within a specified time, otherwise the devil could claim his soul. The man made splendid progress until the devil gave him such a piece of money that he was in despair. A friend advised him to start a daily paper, and long before the time was up he had to holler for more funds. The calls were so frequent that finally the devil returned the cancelled contract. He had to or go broke."

Dick laughed heartily, and Bill whispered: "Don't let him discourage you, Dick. Dad means well, but he's behind the times."

When Dick was riding back to Grafton that evening, he pondered deeply over the proposition. In his heart he knew that Mr. Comstock's advice was sound. It would be much safer to continue as a semi-weekly. But—and here an element, partly pride and partly ambition, entered in. The report had gone forth that he was going to make it a daily. Suppose he did not, then what

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would they think? And Amy? The report had come from her in the first place. What ever would she think? Especially after her flattering remarks of the week before?

That evening, while he was busily writing the county court news, which he had picked up in Ripton, Edward Dixon and Mark Sloan came into the office.

"Good evening, Bevan," said Dixon. "Sloan was just up in my office, and we saw a light over here, and thought we would come over."

"Glad you did," said Dick, heartily. "Sit down and have a cigar."

"Hear you are going to start a daily," remarked Sloan.

"So they say."

"A good idea, Bevan, a rattling good idea. This town is plenty big enough to support two dailies, all right. I've always said so, and I'll stick to it. And, Mr. Bevan, you're just the boy to start it. I've been watching the Independent since you've taken hold of it, and I've often said you ought to make it a daily. Haven't I, Dixon?"

"So you have," admitted Dixon.

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"Yes, that Commercial Club bunch has been running this town long enough. They control everything here. Renard has been mayor now for four terms, and Sayers has been city clerk for twenty years. The Grafton National Bank has been in control of the city treasurer's office ever since the town was incorporated, and it's time we had a change."

"Really, I haven't paid much attention to politics. You see, I'm almost a stranger here."

"Yes. I know you are. But you look into the matter, and you will see that I am right. That man Renard is running things simply for his own benefit. He's one of the big stockholders in the Street Railway Company, and gets a franchise on whatever street he wants it. He manipulated the school board so that they built a new school house out on the outskirts of the town near that factory building the Improvement Association is putting up. Why, there won't be enough children for that school out there in ten years. We need new schools all right, and more schools, but we need them where the people are, not where that crowd expects they will be, and where they have lots to

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sell. I tell you, things are rotten in this town."

"I didn't know that was the situation," remarked Dick.

"No, of course you don't know. That's what I told Dixon. I said that if you knew about it, you would open up on them, and let the people know there was one newspaper that couldn't be bribed. But you make this a daily, go after that gang, and see how the people will buy your paper."

"It takes money to run a daily paper," said Dick gravely.

"Oh, you'll come out all right, and the boys will stand back of you."

"If there is such general dissatisfaction with Renard, why don't the people elect someone else?" asked Dick.

"Why, we've tried to, but every time we get a good man to run, that crowd gets in its fine work, and he either pulls out of the race or lays down. But this year the women vote, and that may change things. You get out a daily, and run it right, and you can beat that crowd to a finish. Well, I see you're busy, but I'll see you again, and put you wise to a lot of the games they're playing. Remember, though, the boys will

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stand back of you. Good night." With these parting words, Sloan and Dixon left the office.

The Independent as a daily evidently was a popular idea, and Dick felt much encouraged by the assurance that "the boys would stand back of him." Just who "the boys" were, and how far back they would be standing when the time arrived for someone to come forward, apparently were minor details.

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CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICS OF GRAFTON



DURING a national or state campaign, Grafton, as well as Washburne county, was overwhelmingly republican, but on local issues, and even for county offices, party affiliations were not considered. It often happened that a democrat would be elected county judge, or county treasurer.

Sometimes it would be personal matters, or petty jealousies that would determine an election. The issue at the last city election in Grafton, if it could be called an issue, was as to the advisability of a bond issue for building a number of new bridges across the river which divided the city in two parts.

The new bridges had been built, but a large number of the tax payers believed that the Street Railway Company should have borne a share of the expense of at least two of them, inasmuch as they were the largest individual users.

Another matter that was attracting con-

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siderable attention at this time was the street paving. A difference of opinion had arisen as to which was the best policy—the special assessment or direct taxation. Some of the principal streets had been paved, and the cost of making the improvement had been levied against the property owners whose property had thus been improved.

Paved streets were desirable, and many property owners wished to have them, but they did not favor the special assessment method. They claimed that everyone was benefited, and that everyone should help share the expense. In other words, that these improvements should be paid out of the general taxes. On the other hand, those who had already paid for improving the street in front of their property, considered it unfair that they should be compelled to help bear the burden of improving another's property.

The local situation was thus outlined to Dick by Sloan, who now was a frequent visitor to the Independent office.

"Well, Mr. Sloan, which do you think is the fairest way?" asked Dick.

"The special assessment method, of course. You see, Dick, this town is now

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bonded for all it should carry. You couldn't raise enough money that way to pave all the streets, and of course the mayor would have a lot to say as to which streets should be paved, and you know what streets those would be."

Dick had partitioned off a small space from the office, which he used as a bed room. He had furnished it inexpensively, and by this means had considerably reduced his personal expenses. He took his meals at the hotel, or perhaps at a near-by restaurant.

Sloan, Dixon, and many others who were opposed to Renard and the element which he represented, knowing that they would generally find Dick at the Independent office in the evening began to make it quite a rendezvous.

In the evening, if Dick expected that he might be gone longer than usual, he would lock the door, and hang the key on a nail just inside the window casing, and if any of the boys would come before he returned, they would unlock the door and make themselves at home. In fact, before the new year dawned, the Independent office was like a club room, sans dues, rules or officers.

During these ten weeks, Dick had met Amy many times, not only in Ripton, but

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also in Grafton. The week before Christmas, while she was in Grafton, she was a member of a theatre party, made up of Dick, Amy, Dixon and Dixon's mother. The next day on her way back home, she had called in at the Independent office, and expressed herself as delighted with the appearance of his establishment.

"We're getting out a Christmas edition," said Dick. "Double size, special features run in colors."

"You certainly are progressive," commented Amy, admiringly. "I like the way you go ahead and do things. When are you going to start the daily?"

"Oh, soon."

The mail next day brought a letter from Mrs. Comstock, inviting him to spend Christmas in Ripton, and Dick was not long in making up his mind whether to accept it or not. Knowing Amy's love for music, and her interest in the operas, he sent to the metropolis for a specially bound book that had just been published, and which he believed would please her.

He had remembrances for other members of the Comstock family, and each of the boys had some token for him. Amy presented

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him with a fountain pen, and when she handed it to him, she said:

"Mr. Bevan, I know you would sooner write with a pencil, but I hope you will use this when you write your first editorial for the new daily."

Before the day was over, which was all too short for Dick, Mr. Comstock had a long talk with him.

"I'm mighty glad to see you getting along so well. Your Christmas number was certainly a credit to any editor."

"Thank you, Mr. Comstock."

"I suppose you still have the daily idea in your bonnet?"

"Yes. I expect to start it soon after the new year."

"It's pretty risky. You've worked hard to get where you are now, and it would be too bad to lose it all."

"But, Mr. Comstock, I think Grafton can support two papers. Don't you?"

"Yes, they could, but would they? Do any of the merchants encourage the idea?"

"Well," said Dick, slowly, "They haven't really expressed themselves."

"The merchants are the ones you must look to for support. It's the advertising that

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pays the bills, you know, not the subscriptions."

Dick stayed for the night at the Comstock home, and next morning when he left to take the early train Bill and Amy walked down to the depot with him.

"I suppose dad threw cold water on the daily idea," said Bill.

"Well, he wasn't very encouraging about it."

"You go ahead, Dick. I know you'll make a go of it, and Amy thinks so, too, don't you, sis?"

"I certainly do. Wasn't that a fine Christmas number he got out, Will?"

"It was a dandy, all right. But you go ahead with the daily, and Amy and I'll back you up all we can, won't we, Amy?"

"We certainly will," she assented, as Dick shook hands with them.

And somehow he felt that their assurances were more tangible than all the promises made by Sloan.

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CHAPTER VII

THE STARTING OF THE DAILY



ANY compliments were received by Dick on his Christmas issue, and the men who gathered in his office of an evening became more and more insistent that he enter the daily field.

"It takes money," remonstrated Dick, remembering the unpaid notes on his press.

"Form a stock company, why don't you?" asked Sloan. "Form a company for say \$5,000 or \$10,000, and have the boys subscribe for the stock. That's the way to do it."

"Suppose you organize the company, Mr. Sloan," suggested Dixon.

"No, it would be better if I come in just as a stock holder. I'll tell you what to do. Mr. Bevan, you, Dixon and Craig, apply for the incorporation papers. I'll furnish the money for the fee. Then go ahead and get subscriptions for the stock."

And so it was arranged. A license to incorporate was received from the secretary

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of state, and the stock and subscription books were opened. The company was to have \$10,000 capital stock, fully paid up and non-assessable. Dick was to turn in his newspaper plant, paper and good-will for his share.

The arrangement looked very good to Dick, but the boys were rather slow in coming forward with their subscriptions to the stock.

The twentieth day of January was the time finally decided upon as the day when the new paper should be launched upon the troubled waters of journalism. It meant for Dick an increase in the mechanical department, as well as added help in the office. It had been hoped that the stock would have been fully subscribed for by this time, and the final act of incorporation completed.

But the "best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley," and when the daily was issued only a small portion of the stock had been subscribed for. Dick had been persuaded to issue the paper anyway. "The boys will come to the front all right when they see it running," assured Sloan.

The first copy that came off the press Dick mailed to Amy—registered—with these

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words in the margin beside the "Salutatory:" "Written with the fountain pen."

A few days later he received a letter from her, the first one she had ever written to him, complimenting him on the appearance of the paper, and especially from a news and editorial standpoint.

"Typographically," she wrote, "Will says it can't be beat, and you know Will is critical."

One paragraph in her letter showed a practical side to her nature. It read: "I do not see that you have any new advertising over what you had for the semi-weekly." He wondered if she suspected that the advertising columns were made up from the semi-weekly, and no extra charge had been made for inserting them in the daily.

With all this extra work Dick found little time for social life. Acting as city editor, business manager, and attending to the circulation department, he found his time well occupied.

The new daily proved to be more popular than had been anticipated. The boys who delivered the paper after school, each day reported new subscribers. The news columns were breezy, fair and clean. Only in

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the editorial columns, the proper place for a newspaper to set forth its policy, were any references made to the mal-administration of the city affairs.

Dick now took a keen interest in the council proceedings, and the public each Tuesday had a full and complete report of the action that body had taken the previous evening.

This report was published without bias or comment. The editorial page was reserved for Dick's opinion of their acts.

Within a month the Daily Independent had as large a list of subscribers as the News, but try as hard as he would Dick was unable to secure additional advertising contracts. The merchants would continue their advertising in the semi-weekly, with an occasional insertion in the daily, but would not contract for a regular ad. Thus while the expenses of the Independent were more than three times what they had been, the income had only increased the small amount received from the sale of the paper.

The stock company had not yet been completed. A number had put their names down, but no money, except what Sloan had

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advanced for the fees to the state secretary, had been paid in.

It was long toward the last week in February when a conference was held in Dick's office, and the following slate for city offices decided upon:

Mayor—Mark Sloan.

City Clerk—Amos Craig.

City Treasurer—David Jackson.

City Attorney—Edward Dixon.

"And now," spoke up Sloan, "we've got that fixed, what about the sinews of war? Our young friend here is running his paper for the benefit of the people, and is going to support the ticket, but you fellows have got to get busy on that stock company. What have you done, Craig?"

"Why, some of the boys have put their names down. Some for \$100 worth of stock, some for \$200, and I'm down for \$500. Dixon's down for the same. How much are you going to take? Your name isn't down yet."

"I'm going to take \$1,000 worth, and here's \$100 on account. Now let me see the color of the other fellows' money. I'll bet Dick needs the money all right. Am I right?" he asked, turning his heavy body

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squarely around in his chair, so he could face Dick.

"Well, I'm running pretty low," answered Dick, "and I've some pressing bills to meet."

"Hear that?" exclaimed Sloan. "Now I move that this money, and what can be collected, be advanced to Dick on account, to keep things going until we can finish incorporating the company. There being no objection, the ayes have it, and the motion is carried."

And under this loose business arrangement the Independent continued to be published.

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CHAPTER VIII

GRANDMA WASHBURN



IT WAS on a Friday morning early in March when Amy, busily engaged in putting up the mail, happened to look out of the office window of the Ripton Gazette, as Alice Conrad came tripping along. Seeing Amy, she came into the office.

"I've a news item for you."

"Well, you've always got some news, being in the postoffice most of the time. What is it?"

"Oh, a personal, I suppose you'll call it. Edith Renard is coming on the eleven o'clock train, and is going to stay a week with me."

"Edith Renard?"

"Yes. Say, girlie, come over to-night, won't you?"

"Surely. I haven't seen Edith since I left school. How does it happen she's visiting you?"

"She wrote to me some time ago, and told me how lonesome she was. You know she always seemed to have the 'blue devils', I

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called them, at school. I wrote to her, inviting her to come and stay a week. Maybe it will liven her up. Say, I must run. That's the train whistling for the crossing now." And out of the door she rushed.

The Conrad family, besides their only daughter, Alice, consisted of Martin Conrad, his wife Martha, and her mother, Grandma Washburne.

Grandma Washburne was an institution in Ripton. Three-quarters of a century before the opening of our story her parents had settled down in the rich prairie land surrounding Ripton. Her father was one of the pioneer colonists that had been organized in one of the old New England states, for the purpose of seeking their fortunes in the west.

Everyone knew Grandma Washburne, and the young folks found great delight in listening to her tales of the early times when the country was new. How her father, the shoemaker of the colony, made the shoes from the hides of the cattle or sheep the settlers had raised. The skins would be taken to the tannery and cured. Then the name of the owner was written upon it, and when a member of that family wanted a pair of boots or shoes, they were made from that

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hide, and the remainder hung up again until needed. And what a long time those shoes lasted!

Her quaint ways and decided manner were oftentimes amusing. As for instance, when she expressed herself in regard to the "new fangled hens," which she called "incuburators."

Alice had taken her to task for the mispronunciation of the word, and to convince grandma, had produced the dictionary in evidence. "Now, see, grandma. It is 'incubator,' not 'incuburator.' "

Grandma looked over her spectacles in her most dignified manner. "Alice," she said solemnly, "I don't care what the book has it. I'd rather be right than to be like the dictionary!"

"Who is this girl that's coming, Martha?" she asked Mrs. Conrad.

"Why, Edith Renard of Grafton. You know George Renard. It's his daughter."

"Yes, I remember George Renard. He's mayor, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess he's a chip of the old block. I remember his father, Eli Renard. He came here in the early days and started a

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store in Grafton. But he would skin a louse for its hide."

"Why, mother! How you talk!"

"It's so, Martha. And from what I've heard about the son I guess he's just like his father. They say the taxes in Grafton are something awful since he's been mayor."

"Do you think Mayor Renard is to blame for that?" asked Mrs Conrad.

"I didn't say he was to blame for it, but I guess he's getting a lot out of it. You know his father always prated how good he was to cash the pay vouchers for the war widows. Well, he got a double profit—first on the calico he sold them, and then on the vouchers, for he never paid full value on them. That's how he made so much money. Then he bought that swamp land and had the county drain it for him. And they tell me now that his son is doing the same thing. Making the people think he is doing great things for them, while all the time he is lining his own pockets."

"Now mother, I hope you won't say anything like that while Edith is here."

"Martha, I'll speak my mind if I want to, if it takes the hide off."

"But mother, remember that Edith is

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Lydia's daughter, as well as George Renard's."

"Yes, I know that. And I'll never forgive him for making that girl as unhappy as he did. She fairly died of a broken heart. Lydia Bristol came of one of the old families that settled around here, and when she married that counter jumper's son I knew she would never be happy. She did not live long afterward, poor thing!"

"Well, from what I've heard, Edith hasn't been very happy. Alice says she would have melancholy spells at school. So now she's coming here for a week, and Alice wants to have things lively for her."

"Martha, I don't like to see young folks moping around when there's no sense in it. If she mopes when I'm around, I'll tell her what I think. Alice may be harum-scarum sometimes, but she don't mope."

If Edith was inclined to be melancholy the atmosphere of the Conrad home on the first evening of her visit certainly was the best panacea imaginable.

The supper table had hardly been cleared when Amy came in.

"More snow, grandma," was her greeting, taking off her hat, and shaking the snow-

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flakes from her golden-brown hair. Grandma always received the first greeting in the Conrad home.

"I'm glad to see you, child, but you might bring better weather with you. I guess Mr. Groundhog knew what he was about when he crawled back into his hole. I don't remember such a long winter."

"Never mind, grandma. Cousin Joe has promised to give Edith a sleigh ride tomorrow," consoled Alice.

"Just like you, Alice. You can always find some good points in everything." And with this Grandma Washburne went on with her knitting.

The three girls, as different from each other as the wildest flight of the imagination could picture, were soon animatedly discussing their adventures since they last met.

"I'm going to have a party Thursday night, Amy, and I want you to help me. An old-fashioned country party. Can you think of something new or different that I could have?"

"Oh, girls, I know! Let's have fortune telling!"

"Fortune telling! How?" asked Alice.

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"Why, like the Hindoo at the time of the fair. Don't you remember him?"

"Yes, indeed I do. But how can we do it?"

"I know how," said Amy, mysteriously.

"Amy Comstock!" exclaimed Grandma Washburne. "Are you in league with them heathen devils?"

These vehement objections of grandma brought Mrs. Conrad in from the kitchen, where she was busily engaged in preparing some dainty for the next day.

"Why, mother, what's the matter?"

"Martha, I believe the world's going crazy. The idea of Amy Comstock in league with them heathens. You should put a stop to it. No good can come of it, mark me!" And the knitting needles clicked like castanets.

The girls laughed right merrily at grandma's protests, and assured her that she need not have her fortune told.

"No good will come of it," she muttered, her sharp blue eyes looking over her spectacles. "I thought you had better sense, Amy Comstock."

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CHAPTER IX

EDITH'S FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE SIMPLE LIFE



SINCE Alice Conrad had finished school, she had, in addition to assisting at home, devoted a great part of her time at her father's store, which was located across the river, near the depot.

The Conrad store was also the postoffice of Ripton, and although Martin Conrad was postmaster, Alice really attended to the details of the office. It was acknowledged on all sides that Alice's cheerful and accommodating manner was the real secret of Martin's continuing to be postmaster of Ripton, regardless of the changes in administration at Washington.

Although only in her twenty-first year, she had sold stamps, sorted mail, and performed such duties for over eight years, and a failure to be on duty on Saturday morning, the busiest time of the week, she considered next to a calamity.

Even when attending school in Grafton, she always returned home at the week end,

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in order to be at the postoffice Saturday morning.

So on this Saturday morning, she jumped up from the breakfast table with the exclamation:

"Oh, Edith dear, you'll have to excuse me now. I must go down to the postoffice. You can come down when you get around to it. Joe promised me he would give you a sleigh ride today."

"There's your new woman for you!" said Grandma Washburne. "Always on the go."

"Alice always was full of ginger," remarked Edith.

"Like my hair, eh?" laughed Alice.

"Yes," broke in grandma, "when you and Amy Comstock get your heads together, there's bound to be a fire somewhere."

"Now, grandma, my hair isn't red. Is it, Edith?" she asked, putting on her wraps.

"No indeed. I only wish mine was that color and curly, instead of being so dark and straight."

"Alice," said grandma, "if you see Joseph, you tell him to sleigh ride that lease up here for Mr. Peterson. He's coming with a load of wood, and I told him I would have the

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lease ready for him. Here it is March, and that lease isn't fixed up yet."

"I wouldn't fret so, mother. Maybe Joe's been too busy to get them ready."

"I'm not worrying, Martha, but what's right wrongs nobody, and Peterson ought to have had his lease long afore this."

"I'll see Joe, grandma, don't worry. He'll be in for his mail. So goodbye, everybody, until I see you again. Come down when you get ready, Edith." Out of the door and down the street she rushed, leaving the other three at the breakfast table.

"You'd better stay here until after dinner, Edith," advised Mrs. Conrad.

"Yes," commented grandma. "You'd only be in Alice's way this morning."

"Why, mother!" remonstrated Mrs. Conrad, "you shouldn't say that."

"I'm not offended, Mrs. Conrad, I know what Mrs. Washburne means. I wish lots of times I had something to do, like Alice. At home papa has a housekeeper, and I really have nothing to do but try to amuse myself."

Joseph Washburne was about five years older than his cousin Alice. His easy-going good natured manner won him a host of friends, while his athletic figure, clean cut

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features and courtly bearing made many of the girls of Ripton envy Alice Conrad for possessing such a handsome cousin.

Alice had hardly been in the postoffice over five minutes, before her cousin came in. "Hello, Alice," was his greeting, "any mail for me?"

"Oh, Joe, grandma wants to see you. Have you got that lease fixed up yet?"

"No, not yet. I was going to make it out this morning."

"Oh yes, Mr. Procrastinator," laughed Alice. "But grandma'll take the hide off you if you don't have it ready for Mr. Peterson this morning. He's coming in with a load of wood, grandma said, and she promised him he could have it then."

"I'm going right over to the office, and make it out now."

"When are you going to give Edith Renard her sleigh ride? That's another promise that I guess you made only to be broken."

"You made that promise. I haven't met her yet."

"Well, you'll meet her when you take the lease up to the house."

"All right, Miss Ate, give me my mail and I'll go."

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"That's a new name you've coined for me
What does it mean?"

"Oh, look it up. I'm busy," laughed Joe,
as he went on his way.

Meantime Peterson had driven up to the
Conrad home in a bob sled loaded with wood.
After stowing it away in the wood shed, he
knocked at the kitchen door.

"Good morning, Missus Conrad, I would
see Missus Washburne if she bane at home,"
was his greeting.

Grandma Washburne was always alive to
whatever was occuring and immediately pre-
sented herself in the kitchen.

"Good morning, Mr. Peterson, I see you
brought the wood."

"Yes, Missus Washburne, I bring you two
kinds. One for the kitchen stove and one
for your fireplace. I tank you like the
wood. Heem is well season, an' not green.
Bane you get my lease ready?"

"No, Mr. Peterson, my grandson hasn't
got it ready yet. But can't you call at his
office and ask him about it?"

"No, Missus Washburne, I bane have no
time, now, I go to the postoffice and get my
mail and go right back to the farm. I bane
making sugar now. I like to have Mr.

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Washburne fix eem up soon. You know, Missus Washburne, you bane purty old now, and you may die, and I maybe have trouble."

"I'll live a good many years yet," answered grandma, testily.

"I hope so, I hope so, Missus Washburne. But I would like the lease."

"Well, you shall have it, Mr. Peterson. I promised you that you should have it to-day, and if I can get hold of that grandson of mine I'll send him out with it; see if I don't."

"Tank you, Missus Washburne, good by." Out of the door he stamped.

When he arrived at the postoffice, Alice asked him if he was going over to Joe's office.

"No, Missus Washburne say that Mr. Joseph he bring out the lease to me this afternoon."

The female portion of the Conrad family were still seated at the dinner table when Joseph Washburne entered the dining room. Martin Conrad had returned to the store to relieve the clerk.

"Well, Joseph, I suppose you have finally got around with the Peterson lease."

"Yes, grandma, I have it all ready for you to sign."

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"Edith, this is my cousin, Mr. Washburne. This is Edith Renard, of Grafton, Cousin Joe," introduced Alice. "Now, Joe, sit down here in my place, and mother will give you a piece of hot mince pie and some coffee. I've got to go right back to the post-office."

After acknowledging the introduction Joe said: "I just got up from the dinner table, but I can always find a place for a piece of Aunt Martha's mince pie."

"Well, it's the last of the mince meat, so you better make the best of it," said his aunt, setting a generous piece before him.

"It would have been the last of you, too, Joe, if you hadn't got around with that lease," spoke up Alice, putting on her hat and coat.

"Has Peterson come in yet?" asked Joe.

"'Has Peterson come in?'" mimicked Alice. "Well, I should say. Hours ago. He was in the postoffice, and I asked him if he was going over to your office, and he said no, he was not; that you was going to bring the lease out to him this afternoon; that grandma said so. I guess he don't want any more to do with you lawyers than he can help."

"Well, I don't blame him," said grandma.

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"They can't be depended on. Seem to have nothing else to do but help people to quarrel."

"I told you to look out, Joe. The best thing you can do now is to drive right out to the farm with that lease this afternoon. That'll give Edith a nice ride, too. The Peterson boys are making sugar and she has never seen a sugar camp, have you, Edith?"

"No," answered Edith, "I certainly would like to see them make maple sugar."

"Bring some syrup back with you, Joe. Goodby, everybody. Take good care of Edith," and away she went.

"My cousin isn't very reposeful," said Joe to Edith across the table.

"She's got more get up and go in her little finger than you have in your whole body," commented grandma. "Now here's two jugs to take with you. I know your mother will want some of the syrup, and forevermore do get started, or you won't get back before dark."

As they drove down the road Grandma Washburne peered out of the window.

"Martha, I believe the sap is beginning to rise."

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"Well, mother, Joe couldn't do better than Lydia Bristol's daughter."

"No, maybe not. But it's a pity she's George Renard's daughter, too."

The Washburne farm was situated something over three miles north of Ripton, on the county road, which followed close to the river. The winter had been one of the old-fashioned kind, and the snow still was well packed on the highways. The sun shone brightly, and the air was just cold enough to bring a ruddy glow to Edith's otherwise pale cheeks.

The strong, athletic figure beside her filled her with a peculiar confidence in herself that she had never felt before. His matter-of-fact way of expressing himself, his easy assurance, struck a chord in her nature that she never before thought had existed. She soon found herself talking as she never believed she could talk. She found herself making remarks, bright or otherwise, that she had never believed she was capable of. Although she had met him but a short hour before, she felt as if she had known him all her life. On the other hand, Joe made himself very agreeable, pointing out various land marks on the road, telling of some of

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his boyhood escapades along the river and in the woods. The erstwhile pensive, melancholy figure at his side when they started had undergone a most marvelous change, that puzzled as well as delighted him. The conventional reserve of Edith's manner evidently had been penetrated as never before, and when they drove through the farm yard gate, her cheeks were aglow, and her dark eyes sparkled like diamonds.

It was one of the Peterson girls, Hilda by name, who came to the side door of the farm house as they drove up. Her blue eyes grew as large as saucers as she viewed Edith in her beautiful furs.

Joe introduced her to the flaxen-haired daughter of the North; Hilda ushered Edith into the house, while Joe drove the cutter into the barn.

Coming back into the house, he found Edith seated before the old-fashioned fireplace, talking to Mrs. Peterson and the girls. Mrs. Peterson told him that her husband was down in the sugar grove helping the boys.

"I'll go down there, then, and have him sign the lease."

"Oh, Mr. Washburne, may I go with you? I would so love to see a sugar camp. I've

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heard so much about them, but I never saw one."

"Well, it's quite a long walk. I'd drive over in the cutter, but it's hard to get to. Your shoes are pretty thin, and those rubbers are no protection," said Joe, looking at her shapely foot with an expression half of disapproval, and half admiringly.

"Oh, if that's the only objection, perhaps Miss Peterson will loan me something more substantial."

"Sure," said Hilda, "you can have my overshoes if you want them." She ran into the kitchen, and came back with a heavy pair of overshoes. "They don't look so nice but they'll keep your feet warm."

Thus fitted out, they started on the path leading to the sugar camp, Joe with a jug in each hand, leading the way. Looking back over his shoulder, he saw that Edith was having hard work keeping up with his long strides, handicapped as she was by the overshoes that were several sizes too large for her.

"Wait a minute," he said, stopping in the path. Taking a strap from his pocket, he passed it through the handles of the two jugs, and threw them over his neck.

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"Now," he said, "take hold of my hand, that'll help some."

Seizing his hand in both of hers, she stumbled along.

"There's the camp!" exclaimed Joe, pointing through the trees. "It isn't so far now. I'm sure you're tired;" solicitiously.

"Oh, I wouldn't miss it for worlds!" answered his companion. "This is the best kind of a lark."

"You don't get out doors much, then?"

"No, I never did go in for athletics, like some of the girls."

"Well, you'll sleep well tonight all right."

The sugar camp was located on the southern slope of a hill, where it was protected from the northern winds. A rude shelter of logs, that Joe told Edith had been built by his grandfather, was set up on the side of the hill. In front of it was the big iron caldron. A rude foundation of stones formed a fire-place beneath it, and a roaring fire of wood kept the contents at the simmering point. Peterson was busily stirring the contents as they approached.

"Well, Meester Washburne, Ay bane glad to see you. Did you bring the lease?"

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"All ready for you to sign, Mr. Peterson. How's the sap running?"

"Purty good, purty good. Ay tank we all have lots of sugar dis year."

Edith was greatly interested in the tapping of the trees, the boiling of the sap, and the process of making sugar. "Why," she exclaimed, "and all the sap that caldron holds will only make eight or ten pounds of sugar?"

"That's all," said Joe. "It's a good tree that will average over four pounds of sugar. This is about the only sugar grove around here now, and grandma would sooner lose anything else than have anything happen to her sugar trees. One of the terms of the lease is that grandma is to have one-half the sugar. The sugar they made from those old trees was the only kind they had in the early times. Sometimes they got white sugar, but they called that 'store sugar,' and that was a luxury. Now maple sugar is a luxury."

"How interesting!" said Edith. "I just love to hear about those old times."

"Well, you get grandma started sometime and she'll tell you a lot," assured Joe, as they started back to the farm house with the jugs filled with maple syrup.

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"Oh, Mr. Washburne, what are all those bottles tied to the trees for?" pointing to a tree just beside the path.

Joe stopped and looked, and burst out laughing.

"Oh, that's the boys' way of gathering the sap;" reaching up and pulling down one of the branches. "They cut off the end of the branch, slip the bottle over it and tie it on. Of course the sap runs into the bottle. That tree has been ornamented with bottles ever since I was a boy. Take a drink of it," he urged, removing a bottle which was nearly full.

Edith took a sip of the fragrant, sweet sap, and handed the bottle back to him.

"All right, I'll finish it, and put it back for more," he laughed.

Mrs. Peterson would not let them start on the return trip until she had served them with delicious coffee, with thick cream, and cakes of her own baking.

"And that is the old homestead," remarked Edith, as they were driving back to Ripton.

"Yes," answered Joe, "my father's grandfather, Grandpa Washburne's father, bought it originally from the government. It fact, he settled on it before it was surveyed, and it

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has been in the family ever since. When grandma goes, it will be divided between Alice and I."

"Then will you go to farming?"

"No, not for me. I like the legal profession too well. Grandma was always opposed to my studying law. She wanted me to be a doctor."

"Why did she object to your being a lawyer?"

"Oh, she thinks it is a useless profession. You know grandma by this time, I guess. She don't hesitate about expressing herself. She says we lawyers don't do anything but help people to quarrel. According to her, I am a useless member of the community."

"You're state's attorney now, and maybe you will be something bigger. I think you have much greater opportunities than you would have as a country doctor."

"Yes, I think so, but I never could get grandma to think that way."

"Think what opportunities you have now to bring criminals and lawbreakers to justice," commented Edith, admiringly. "I couldn't think of your doing anything but insisting on the full penalty being meted out to the guilty ones."

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"Even if it was my own brother, if I had one?" joked Joe.

"Even if it was your own brother," said Edith, solemnly.

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CHAPTER X

ALICE'S PARTY



UNDAY afternoon Amy, Alice and Edith were in Grandma Washburne's room, listening to her tales of the early days. No queen ever held greater power over her subjects than did she, when seated in her rocking chair before the fireplace, telling stories of the past. Of the passing of the Indian, of the time she was chased by a bear and hid in the big kettle that hung in the woodshed; the same kettle in fact that was still used to boil the sap from the maple trees.

Amy and Alice had heard these stories time and time again, but they urged grandma to tell them for Edith's benefit.

Joe Washburne and his mother came in about supper time, and the young folks spent a merry evening, although grandma tabooed the playing on the piano of any music that appeared to be light or frivolous. It was when Amy was playing a selection from one of the late operas that grandma started up

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with the exclamation: "Martha, don't those girls know it's the Sabbath day?"

"Why, grandma," said Amy, stopping her playing, and turning around on the piano stool, "this is opera."

"Well, I don't care what you call it. It sounds very much like a dance to me."

It was Wednesday night when the girls gathered at Alice's home to make the final arrangements for the party. Amy, in accordance with her promise, had brought over the Vial of Vishnu.

"What a curious looking bottle!" exclaimed both the other girls.

"No, no, not a bottle," remonstrated Amy, unconsciously repeating the very words of the Hindoo. "The Vial of Vishnu. See his sign?" pointing to the strange markings on the front of the Vial.

"What do you do with it?" asked Edith.

"Why, we write the fortunes on blank sheets of paper. See, I brought the same paper from the office. We'll fix up as many fortunes as there are people coming. As they come in give each person one of the sheets of paper. They write their name on it, and put it in a tin box. Then we put the box near the fireplace and cover it over. Later in the

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evening each person will be given one of the fortunes and he or she is to read it aloud and then read the name on the back."

"That will be lots of fun," exclaimed Alice.

"But," objected Edith, "how do you know what kind of a fortune any one is going to get?"

"That's where the fun comes in. They don't see anything on the paper when they write their name and put it in the box. When they are read, you read the fortune first, and then the name."

"Oh, that will be just too killing for anything!" cried Alice, enthusiastically. "Let's get busy. We'll do it up in my room, and grandma won't hear us."

It was a merry crowd of young people that assembled in the Conrad home that Thursday evening in March. As had been previously arranged, each of the guests was given a sheet of paper—evidently blank—and told to write his or her name on it, and deposit it in the tin box which Alice had secured from the store.

Some of the "cut-ups" or would-be humorists of the village, made facetious remarks as they performed this duty. The "fortunes"

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which the girls had prepared the evening before, had been arranged in two piles. One lot would be appropriate to gentlemen, and the other for the ladies.

Alice, Amy and Edith received the guests, and instructed them as to handling the "fortunes." They were not to participate in the fortune telling seance. It was Joe Washburne, who heard from his Aunt Martha the secret method by which the fortunes had been prepared, and when the opportunity presented itself he wrote Edith Renard's name on one of the sheets of paper, unknown to anyone present. As previously arranged, the box was set on one side of the fireplace, and covered with a cloth.

It was truly an old-fashioned country party such as Edith never before had attended. The old-fashioned games—"Spin the Platter," "Happy is the Miller," "Clap In, Clap Out," "Drunken Sailor," "Forfeits," "Charades," and the like were played.

It was while the refreshments were being enjoyed that the mysterious fortune-telling box was uncovered, brought into the center of the room and opened. Each of the guests was given one of the folded sheets of paper, and each in turn was told to read it aloud,

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and after so doing was to read the name on the back.

Some of the fortunes were certainly amusing, some of them were taken seriously, and being as well acquainted as they all were, many interpreted the fortunes which had fallen to others in ways that one would least expect.

It happened to be George Comstock who received the sheet which bore Edith's name.

It read:--"You will soon be involved in a love affair that will change the course of your entire life."

"Why, I didn't put my name on any of those sheets of paper!" exclaimed Edith.

"Did you, Alice, or you, Amy?"

"No, I didn't," answered both girls in chorus.

"Can I have it?" she asked of George.

"Sure; it's got your name on it, so I guess it belongs to you," and he handed the sheet of paper to her.

"Now, girls, see, that isn't my writing!"

"Well, it isn't mine; nor is it Amy's," said Alice, after examining it.

"Maybe it is Vishnu, himself," laughed Amy.

"Well, it certainly is some heathenish

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doings," spoke up Grandma Washburne, who had been an interested spectator of the proceedings.

"Say, grandma, suppose it had been your name written on there instead?" joked Joe.

"There would be no likelihood of that, Joseph. I'm not in league with them evil demons."

It was Saturday morning that Alice was helping Edith to pack her suit case, preparatory to her return to Grafton on the early train, when her mother called Alice to come down stairs for a moment.

Edith had completed her packing, with the exception of some toilet articles in one of the drawers of the dresser which she had just opened, when she caught sight of the Vial of Vishnu, placed there by Alice the previous Wednesday evening.

"I'd love to borrow that, so I can have a party like Alice's. I never had such a good time in all my life," Edith said to herself. "I'll put it in my suit case and tell Amy."

"Edith!" called Alice, "breakfast is ready, and Joe is here to help us to the depot with your suit case."

And in the excitement of her departure, the Vial of Vishnu was not mentioned.

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CHAPTER XI

THE MAYOR OF GRAFTON



GEORGE RENARD, mayor of Grafton, was a large, heavy-set man, with black hair showing the frosting of time. His father was one of the early settlers of Grafton, and engaged in a general merchandise business. Anticipating the city's growth, he had made many fortunate real estate investments, and then finding that these interests were occupying a large amount of his time and were quite profitable, he disposed of his store to two of his clerks, and devoted his entire time to the real estate business.

Eli Renard's ambition was that his only son should be a great lawyer, and after graduating from the Grafton Academy, he had been sent to the state university.

George Renard had not taken kindly to the idea, and therefore it was really a relief to him when it was decided that he abandon his studies at the university, early in the spring of the first year, and return to Grafton.

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ton to assist his father in his real estate operations.

When Eli Renard died the following fall, he divided his property equally between his son and his wife.

It was shortly after his father's death that George married Lydia Bristol, the daughter of one of the old settlers of Washburne county, and after a short honeymoon the newly-weds took up their residence in the Renard home.

George's mother was well pleased with his selection of Lydia as his wife, and harmony reigned in the Renard household, which had always coveted a daughter. When Edith was born her grandmother made the most peculiar will that was ever probated in Washburne county. It bequeathed a life interest in all her property, real and personal, to her daughter-in-law, Lydia, and after her death it was to be equally divided between her daughters. George Renard, her son, was appointed administrator and conservator until the youngest should become of age.

George had remonstrated with his mother when she told him the terms of her will, but she expressed herself very forcibly, and said

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that she believed that the "women folks" ought to have something to say about money matters, and the surest way was to let them have property in their own name. She told Lydia that she had made a vow years ago that if it was ever in her power to do so she would see to it that any "women folks" of her flesh and blood should be independent of asking their husbands for "pin money."

When the mail train from Ripton stopped at Grafton Saturday morning, the Renard automobile was waiting at the station platform for Edith. Mrs. Eaton, the housekeeper, met her, and said that her father had left on an early train for the metropolis on important business, and would not be home until evening.

The Renard home was located on one of the main streets of Grafton. A large, old-fashioned brick structure, that had been remodeled and equipped with all modern conveniences. It was set in the midst of spacious grounds that occupied about half a city square, and was surrounded by a high iron fence. While it was one of the residences that was always pointed out to the visitors to the city, and one would naturally believe the owners or occupants would be happy, Edith

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always felt that the heavy iron fence and massive gates reminded her of a prison. Whenever she had given vent to her ideas on the matter to Mrs. Eaton, that good lady always appeared to be very much shocked.

Mrs. Eaton was of English birth and parentage, and although she had been in the United States for some twenty-five years, she still believed in the traditions of the feudal ages, and during her regime in the Renard home, she ingrafted a number of ceremonies and forms that would have been appropriate for the manor house of a baronial estate.

Mrs. Eaton had been in charge of the Renard household since Mrs. Renard's death, which occurred when Edith was about five years of age. She was a very capable woman and was always very solicitous as to the comfort of Renard and his daughter. Edith was of a docile disposition, and left entirely to the care of Mrs. Eaton had absorbed from her a veneer of aristocratic ideas that had held her aloof from forming very intimate friendships with girls of her set. Mrs. Eaton had always given them to understand that "Miss Edith" was the mayor's daughter, and therefore a very important personage. As a consequence Edith had grown more depen-

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dent on herself for amusement and recreation, and at times had spells of melancholy which Alice had called the "blue devils."

Most of the people in Grafton had dinner at twelve o'clock, and supper at six, but in the Renard household they lunched at twelve and dined at six.

Renard was rather late to dinner, and Edith was eagerly awaiting his arrival.

"Well, my little girl, did you have a good time?" he asked at the dinner table.

"Oh, splendid, papa. I never enjoyed myself so much in all my life. Alice had a party Thursday night; an old-fashioned party. Papa, I'm going to have a party."

"So? What kind of a party?"

"Like Alice had. Invite a lot of young folks."

"When is all of this to be?"

"Oh, I haven't fixed the time yet?"

"How about it, Mrs. Eaton?" inquired Renard, looking over to the housekeeper.

"Really, sir, this is the first I have heard about it," said the punctilious Mrs. Eaton.

"Maybe Miss Edith means a reception."

Renard was silent for a moment, then rising from the table he said:

"Edith, we'll talk it over in the library."

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"How many people are you going to invite to your party?" asked the mayor, seating himself in an easy chair, and taking a cigar out of his cigar case.

"I haven't counted up. There'll be all the girls and boys that were in my class at the Academy, and a lot of the young people. Do you know, papa, I haven't had a party or anything of that kind since I was a little girl?"

"Well, aren't parties out of style?" I thought receptions were the proper thing." Gazing meditatively at the end of his cigar.

"But, papa, receptions are so stiff and formal. At Alice's party there wasn't any formality, and everyone had such a good time. And the fortune telling was such fun."

"Fortune telling!" laughed her father, "did you have a gypsy fortune teller?"

"Oh, no. It was a mysterious Hindoo fortune telling. One of the strangest things I ever heard of. Wait a minute, and I'll show you." She hurried out of the room, soon to return with the Vial of Vishnu.

"See!" she exclaimed, holding it before his eyes.

"Why, what's that?" taking it from her

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hand, and twisting the stopper around to remove it.

"Careful! You'll spill it!"

"Why, what's in it?" holding it to his nose. I don't smell anything."

"No, of course not. It isn't a smelling bottle. But you use the fluid for writing on a sheet of blank paper the fortunes, and then the guests write their names on the back. I'll show you," and taking a piece of paper she wrote her name on it, using the end of a match for the purpose. After allowing it to dry she handed the sheet to her father.

"Now, what do you see?"

"Nothing," he answered.

"All right. Now watch." And she placed the sheet of paper on the radiator. Faintly at first, then sharper and clearer the characters in her name appeared on the sheet of paper.

"Well, that is certainly mysterious. Where did you get this?"

"Oh, I borrowed it of the girls. A Hindoo came into Amy's office and gave it to her, and showed her how to use it. Now, at my party I'm going to use it to write the fortunes."

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"I wouldn't," said her father, shaking his head, impressively.

"Why not?"

"Well, it's too much like copying after them. Have something different."

"And not have the fortunes?"

"Decidedly not. You are going to invite those girls, and they will know all about it. Have something different."

While Renard was talking, he was turning the Vial of Vishnu over and over in his hand, examining it very critically.

"I tell you what you can do. Have a reception, and a dance afterward. Engage the Mendelssohn String Orchestra, and have the Academy Glee Club if you like."

"And no fortune telling?" Asked Edith, ruefully.

"No, no fortune telling. But that ought to be enough," smiled her father.

"Well, all right, but I'm going to invite whoever I please."

"Surely. But I think I'll take care of this Hindoo." So saying, he unlocked a private drawer in the library table. "We'll put him in here for safe keeping, until you can return him to the girls."

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"But, papa, don't you let me forget to give it to them when they come."

"No, I won't. But now I must be going down to the club. I expect to see some men on important business. You and Mrs. Eaton can fix up the party."

"Business" was a vague, mysterious being to Edith. She had consulted the dictionary for a meaning of the word, and the nearest approach to a definition was "something that occupied one's entire time."

Mrs. Eaton had always spoken of the butcher, and grocer as "trades-people," but her father was engaged in "business." She had heard, however, of "successful business" as applied to a grocer or a butcher. Mrs. Eaton might have defined a successful business man as one who left his home in the morning, and came home in the evening with his pockets full of money. How he obtained it, she would explain by saying "he had made it out of his business."

"Business" in the minds of the female portion of the Renard household, as well as in thousands of other households, was some strange process of alchemy by which time was changed into gold or its equivalent. Why some of the followers of this "non-

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learned" profession were successful in making this Midas-like change, and others were not, was a problem they had never attempted to solve.

Working people, mechanics and the like had "jobs" and earned "wages." "Business" people held "positions" and received "salaries." "Professional" people "performed services" and were tendered or exacted "fees." Evidently there was a distinction—what made it?

But why should they attempt to solve a problem that the ablest political economists had disputed over?

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CHAPTER XII

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY



ENARD dispensed with the use of his auto on his trip down town, preferring to ride on the electric car which passed by the door. His destination was the rooms of the Grafton Commercial Club, a select organization of a number of the principal business men of the city.

His trip to the metropolis that day had been in connection with very important business relating to the street railway company. The Grafton Street Railway Company had laid its first rails and operated its first cars almost twenty years ago. The original franchise was through the principal street of the city a distance of some four miles, and was for a period of twenty years.

From time to time branch lines were built, radiating in different directions from the center of the city, and making transfers to the main line, or any of the other branches at City Square Park.

An inter-urban line that was to connect

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the city of Grafton with the metropolis to the east, and continue westward through Grafton, was anxious to get a franchise through the center of the city, and locate a station on or near City Square Park.

Renard and those who were associated with him were anxious to get a renewal of their franchise, and then consolidate with the Inter-Urban line, or lease to the latter company a right of way through the city. There were three bridges across the Beaver River within the corporate limits of Grafton, and each of the bridges was used by the Grafton Street Railway Company.

The people of Grafton were in favor of the Inter-Urban line, and desired that it should pass as nearly as possible through the center of the city, but the property owners on the next street north, as well as the next street south, objected to a car line on their streets. The most logical solution of the problem was to have the Inter-Urban line use the same tracks as the Grafton Street Railway Company through the main street of the city.

Mayor Renard felt perfectly confident of re-election, as well as the election of a board of aldermen that would favor the extension

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of the franchise to the company in which he was interested, and with this feeling of assurance he had made his trip to the metropolis with the object in view of arranging a plan of consolidation.

When he entered the rooms of the Commercial Club he noted Frank Ross and Fred Wolff seated in a far corner talking very earnestly. After removing his hat and overcoat he sauntered over to them.

"Pull up a chair, George," spoke up Ross, after exchanging greetings. "Fred and I were just talking about you."

"Nothing like talking about a good thing," laughed Renard. "Why, by the expression of your faces, one would think you were holding an inquest."

"Things don't look so bright as we would like to see them," explained Wolff, the younger of the three.

"What's the matter now—that Independent carpet bagger giving the News a hard tussle?"

"Not exactly, but Mr. Ross tells me something that confirms a suspicion I have had for some time."

"What's that, Ross?"

"Well, among the checks that one of the

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merchants deposited in our bank today were two drawn on the First National Bank of Grafton" by the Inter-Urban Company."

"What of that?"

"I think those people across the square are interested in the Inter-Urban road, with this man Jackson of their bank running on the reform ticket for treasurer."

"Maybe they have just opened up a small account to be used for paying off the workmen," reassured Renard.

"I don't know about that," answered Ross. "Their checks have gone through our bank before, but they were always drawn on the bank in the city where their main offices are located. The merchants here have always cashed these checks for the workmen, and there would not be any need of opening an account for that. I tell you the fellows over in that bank are boosting up this Independent daily, and the Inter-Urban line is in the game."

"Well, what if they are? They can't elect their ticket. What's the matter with you? Getting cold feet?"

"No," answered Ross, slowly; "but there's an unknown quantity in this election that you haven't figured on."

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"What's that?"

"Why, the women's vote."

"The women's vote? What of that? They will vote the same way the men do," scoffed Renard.

"Don't fool yourself on that. They're going to cut some figure in this election. Have you seen the Independent? No? Well that sheet runs two columns every day, playing up to the women."

"How many columns are you running for the women?" asked the mayor, turning to Wolff.

"I'm not saying much about it."

"Why not? Aren't their votes as good to us as the men's?"

"Yes," said Wolff, "if we can get them."

"Why can't we get them, I'd like to know?"

"You tell him, Mr. Ross."

"Well, I'm judging by what I hear the women folks say at home. There's four votes there, and of the four you'll only get one."

"Only one out of four!" exclaimed Renard. "Explain yourself."

"My wife and daughter and the hired girl are all for Sloan. My vote is the only one you'll get."

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"And you can't persuade them to vote for me?"

"No."

"What's the objection?"

"The school question. That new school house that was built out on West End Avenue they say is only half filled, while the schools down around us are so crowded that the children in some of the grades can only go half a day."

"I'm not the school board!" broke in Renard, angrily.

"No, but they say you influenced them to put up that building out there. Then there's the paving question. Those people who have paved their streets by special assessment, oppose the bond issue that has been proposed for paving the other streets. They say that means paying twice."

"Where do you get all this dope?"

"Why, I get it every meal time, now," answered Ross. "I tell you, George, these women nowadays seem to be better posted than the men."

"When my wife was living, she would do as I asked," commented the mayor, meditatively.

"It's a good many years since she died,

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George, and women have changed since those days. How are your women going to vote?"

"Why, I never thought of it. Of course my daughter can vote, but the housekeeper hasn't any. I suppose you think we ought to do something to line up the woman vote?"

"It looks that way to me," spoke up Wolff.

"How did you come out with the consolidation scheme?" asked Ross.

"Nothing doing. Had my trip for nothing. They seemed to be very evasive. Said they would not come to any decision until the next meeting of their board of directors."

"When is that?"

"The second Wednesday in April."

"You know what that means, George."

"What?"

"Why, they won't make any move until after election. If you lose, why they get the franchise on Grafton Avenue, and our road goes into the junk pile."

"God, man, you certainly have got them bad! Pull yourselves together. I'll think of some scheme to get the woman vote if you think we need it."

"We need it, all right," answered Ross, grimly, shaking his head.

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"Well, we'll get 'em, all right. Call up one of the boys, and we'll start a four-handed game of draw," and to all appearances he dismissed the subject from his mind.

It was late when the game broke up, and the cars had ceased to run. Ross walked home along with Renard, leaving him a few blocks from his home. On the way they had talked over the situation more fully, and by the time they parted Renard concluded that his prospects for re-election were not as bright as he had believed.

"One more term," he repeated to himself. Truly it was necessary. He must safeguard the interests of the stockholders. The franchise must be renewed. And so resolved, he entered his home.

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CHAPTER XIII

EDITH'S PARTY



RS. EATON was a devout church member, but she did not belong to the same denomination as Edith and her father. Edith's mother and grandmother had always attended the Congregational church, and Sunday morning would always find her and her father in the family pew. She had always taken considerable interest in church work, belonging to a number of the societies, but in spite of all the arguments of her many friends, she had never joined either of the women's clubs.

She therefore was considerably surprised at the dinner table that Sunday when her father asked:

"Edith, are the women in your club going to vote for me?"

"Why, papa, what club?"

"Why, your woman's club."

"I don't belong to any woman's club. Do you mean the Young People's Society, or the Ladies' Aid Society at the church?"

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"No, I don't. I mean the women's clubs, that are talking so much about teaching cooking and sewing in the schools, and things like that."

"Maybe you mean the Woman's Civic Society, or the Grafton Woman's Club?"

"I suppose that's what they call themselves. Delegations have called to see me occasionally about one thing and another, but I have never paid much attention to what club it was they said they represented. By the way, why don't you join one or both of these clubs?"

"I've been invited to join many times, but you know, papa, you've always said that you did not believe in women's clubs."

"Is that so? I don't remember objecting much to what you wanted to do."

"Well, you said that you didn't think women ought to take part in politics."

"No, and I don't think so; but they are doing it, and in this election—the first time they ever voted for mayor or aldermen, they seem to be pretty lively. Edith, I think you'll have to do some campaigning for your old father."

"How, papa?"

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"Well, this party you are going to have. You could invite these club members."

"Why, that would spoil my party! I just want the young folks. And some of the members of those clubs are old enough to be my grandmother." Edith pouted her lips ruefully.

"Now don't object, Edith. Don't you understand that I need their votes? You can have a reception in the afternoon for them, and have the young folks in the evening."

"I don't like that, and besides I have no list of the members of those clubs."

"I guess I can get a list. Don't they have a printed list of some sort?"

"Yes, I believe they have. But I haven't got one."

"Never mind, Edith. I guess the News printed it, and I can get it from Wolff. By the way, he'll be here this afternoon, won't he?"

"I don't know whether he will or not. I'd just as lief he didn't," answered Edith, abstractedly.

"What! You haven't quarrelled with him, have you?" bantered her father.

"Quarrel!" she exclaimed. "Why should I quarrel with Fred Wolff?"

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"I don't know. He always seemed much interested in you, and you was always agreeable to him."

"Well, I'm not enough interested in him to quarrel, either with him or about him—rest assured of that."

"So," said her father, as he rose from the table. "Maybe there is some one else you might quarrel about?"

Edith flushed, but made no reply.

It was about an hour later when she came downstairs with her hat and coat.

"Going out?" asked her father in surprise.

"Yes, papa. I'm going over to see Julia Ross. I'll be back soon."

Just at this moment the bell rang, and Fred Wolff was ushered into the library.

"Well, Miss Renard. I'm glad to see you back. Have a good time?"

"Oh, a splendid time, Mr. Wolff. But you'll have to excuse me now. I have an engagement. I'll be back soon, and you can talk to papa while I'm gone."

"Edith is going to do some electioneering for me," joked Renard.

"I won't talk politics at all, papa, so there!" she answered with flashing eyes, and stamping her foot by way of emphasis.

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Both men were considerably puzzled by this new exhibition of Edith's nature. Wolff imagined he never could remember when she had looked so captivating. Her father, although surprised, secretly admired her exhibition of spirit.

"Will I see you before I leave?" asked Wolff.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "Goodby until then."

"She's a thoroughbred, my boy," commented Renard, handing Wolff a cigar. "She's going to have a party, and she don't like some suggestions I've offered in regard to it."

"She's old enough to plan her own social affairs, isn't she?"

"My boy, this is a different kind of a social affair. You remember what you and Ross were talking about last night, don't you?" Well, I have a scheme by which we can turn this party to our benefit politically. Edith wants to have a party, and I suggested that she have a reception in the afternoon of the same day. Invite these club women to the reception in the afternoon, and then she can have the young folks in the evening. See the idea?"

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"Did she object to it?"

"Well, she didn't like it. Says she has no list of these club members. By the way, Fred, can't you get a list?"

"Why yes, I guess so. In fact, I believe it is in their calendar. We printed those. I'll look it up in the morning."

"Good. Then we'll have them in the afternoon, and the girl can have her dance and the young folks in the evening. Then it won't look as if it was a put-up job, just for political effect. We need their votes, you say, and a reception will be a good move."

Renard and Wolff spent the remainder of the afternoon in discussing business matters in which they were mutually interested. Wolff remained for tea and accompanied Edith to church.

On the way home Wolff remarked inquiringly: "And so you had a good time up in the country?"

"Yes, I had a splendid time."

"I suppose those country bumpkins were more interesting than we city men?"

"Well, they evidently think that there are other things in the world besides chasing the almighty dollar," she answered, tartly.

"Nothing personal, I hope."

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"Just as you like."

At the foot of the steps he bid her good-night.

"Won't you come in?" she asked. "Papa is in the library."

"No, thank you. Tell him I'll see him in the morning."

The next morning Wolff made his appearance in Renard's office with the two club calendars which contained a roster of the club. Renard examined the list of names critically, and then turning to Wolff said:

"Pretty formidable list, eh? Most of the best people in town. I never thought before that it amounted to so much."

"No, I suppose not. But now they vote, and we'll have to pay attention to some of the things they want."

"Well, we'll jolly them along with this reception. By the way, you had better get those invitations out. Print them in good style—you know more about those things than I do."

"When is it to be?"

"Let's see. Suppose we make it the Thursday before election. That'll be a good time, don't you think?"

"Don't you think it would be a good idea

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to ask your daughter if that is agreeable to her?" asked Wolff, remembering the evening before.

"Oh, that's all right. I'll fix that with Edith. She's going to have her set in the evening."

After the daily was launched Dick Bevan found his time was so occupied with his many duties that he had to abandon the trips he had formerly made to the various towns scattered throughout the county. He had also found it necessary to discontinue his Monday trip to the county seat, but since Christmas he had become almost a regular visitor at the Comstock home on Sundays, oftentimes staying over to take the early train Monday morning.

Amy volunteered to see to it that he was kept posted on all important court proceedings, and with the assistance of her brothers and her father she had no difficulty in doing so. Every Saturday there appeared a two column article headed "What Women are Doing," signed "X". No one but Dick knew that she was the author of these articles.

It was the Sunday previous to Edith's party that she showed him an invitation she

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had received the day before from Edith, inviting her to the dance.

"Alice has been invited, and so has Joe Washburne," she explained. "I suppose you are going?"

"I'm afraid not. I don't travel in that set, you know, Amy."

"Because you are opposing her father for mayor, Dick?"

"That may be it. Of course I have no invitation for one thing, and then you know I have no friends in Grafton outside of the boys in the lodge."

"It looks to me as if it was going to be something out of the ordinary," commented Amy. "Dancing from nine to twelve," she read from the invitation.

"Nine to twelve, eh!" exclaimed Dick. "That's funny. Mrs. Dixon got an invitation reading from two to five."

"What! Is Mrs. Dixon invited?"

"Yes, she's got an invitation. Ed told me."

"Did Edward get an invitation?"

"Not that I know of. Mrs. Dixon's invitation just read: 'Mrs. John S. Dixon.' And yours reads from nine to twelve. Well, that kind of breaks up my combination."

"Why, how's that, Dick?"

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"Well, Otis Skinner is going to be at the opera house that night, and I have four passes. I figured on having Mrs. Dixon, Ed, you and I go and see him. But if you go to Edith's dance that settles it."

"Well, if you are not invited, I'm not going," she declared, emphatically. "I'll go down to Grafton with Alice and Joe Washburne, and go with you and the Dixon's to the theatre. Alice may not like it, but Edith is more of her friend than mine."

It was not until Dick called at the Dixon home that Thursday evening to escort Amy to the opera house that he learned the truth about Edith's party.

"Do you know, Mr. Bevan," explained Mrs. Dixon; "I believe that reception this afternoon is going to hurt the mayor an awful lot?"

"How's that?"

"Well, it seems that he invited all the club women for the afternoon, and the young folks for the evening, but some of the members who have daughters who were invited for the evening are going in the evening themselves. I would have gone this evening if it hadn't been that this is the only chance

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we will have of seeing Otis Skinner this season "

"Was there much of a crowd there," asked Dick.

"My, yes. The house was beautifully decorated, music, colored waiters and that English housekeeper of his was as stiff as a broomstick. I'd heard about her, but I'd never seen her before."

"Why did they arrange it that way, Mrs. Dixon?" asked Amy.

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Won't it spoil Edith's dance, if the old folks go there in the evening?" asked Dick.

"Well, I guess it will," answered Mrs. Dixon.

"That's too bad," commented Amy. "Edith is a nice girl, and seemed to have such a good time when she was in Ripton."

"She can thank that stiff-necked housekeeper for this. She's old enough now, I should think, to choose her own way," said Mrs. Dixon.

Renard flattered himself that he and Wolff had played a master stroke when they sent out the invitations to the club members, but they had overlooked the fact that among those who had received invitations because

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their names were on the club roster were a number of young ladies who had attended the Academy with Edith. Many young ladies invited for the evening had mothers who were members of the clubs, and these mothers had received invitations for the afternoon. They naturally concluded that it was an error of the printer, and accompanied their daughters to the dance in the evening.

In a number of families it happened that an elder daughter would be a member of a club, and so received an invitation for the afternoon, while a younger sister had received one for the evening. This apparent discrimination on account of age was naturally very much resented, and in consequence there was fully as large a crowd in the evening as in the afternoon.

Renard was jubilant at the dinner table, and joked with Edith and Alice, who had been assisting her during the afternoon.

Edith had tried to make herself believe that she had had a good time during the afternoon, but there seemed to be something out of harmony, and she could not understand what it was.

Later in the evening when the young folks began to make their appearance, ac-

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accompanied by their mothers she realized what the trouble was.

Calling her father aside when she had an opportunity, she asked him:—

"Papa, I thought I was to have my party in the evening, and here all these old folks are coming. What does it mean?"

"Why, I don't know. But then it's all right. There's room enough, and plenty to eat for all of them. I'm glad to see them. The more that comes that much the better," he answered jubilantly.

"But it spoils my party."

"Spoils nothing. Have a good time."

"Let me ask you something. How were those invitations sent out?"

"Why, from the names in the club book. Wolff and I sent one to every one whose name was in the books."

"Why, papa; didn't you know that some of them must have received two invitations, one from me and the one you sent?"

"Well, what if they did? That shows that we were anxious to have them come. Edith, this a grand success."

And then Edith realized how ignorant her father and Wolff must be of the usages of polite society.

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It was later in the evening, during the time the Glee Club was giving a selection between one of the dances when Washburne was talking to Edith, that she vented her feeling of resentment.

"I hope you feel more cheerful than that frown would indicate," he remarked jokingly.

"Was I frowning?" she asked.

"Well, maybe one would hardly call it a frown, but you looked as though something displeased you. I hope it was not anything I have said."

"Why, no," she answered with an attempt to smile. "But I feel disappointed somehow. I hoped to have a party like your cousin had at Ripton, and somehow I can't."

"Why not?"

"Well, it seems kind of stiff and formal. I wish I could have things like other girls—like Alice and Amy for instance."

"And why can't you?" asked Washburne in surprise.

"I wanted to, but papa wouldn't let me have it that way. He had to invite all those club women this afternoon, and then some came this evening. I was to have my party this evening, and just have the young peo-

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ple. I wish I was independent, and could have things the way I wanted, but I have to do just as papa or Mrs. Eaton thinks is proper. If there was any way by which I could earn my living I'd do it, so I could do as I pleased."

"Why, Miss Renard, I'm surprised to hear you talk that way. I thought you had everything just as you wished."

"Well, I don't," she answered, wearily. "I wanted to take a business course at school, but no, papa said I should study other things, and he had Mrs. Eaton quoting to me the proper things for me to study—literature, music, languages, art, and things like that. What I learned wouldn't help me to earn a living."

"Why, Miss Renard, you don't have to work for a living."

"I either have to do that or do as papa wants me to, don't I?" she asked tartly; and then added, by way of apology, "I never expressed myself this way before, but somehow I feel as if I could tell you. I feel like a rebel tonight."

"I really don't know what answer to make to you," he replied, meditatively. "You

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should be your own mistress; you're of legal age, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes, but I can't earn my own living."

"You don't have to work for a living."

"I don't? I'd like to know why not."

"Why, the income from your property ought to keep you," he explained.

"My property!" she exclaimed. "I have no property. What do you mean?"

Washburne looked at her in surprise, and then answered: "The property that you inherited by your grandmother's will."

"You talk in riddles. What do you mean."

Washburne's legal training and keen intuition warned him that he was treading on dangerous ground, and he was slow to make reply.

"Tell me," she insisted, "What do you mean?"

"Your grandmother made the most remarkable will that was ever probated in Washburne County. I should not tell you what the terms were if you don't know, but you were well provided for."

The orchestra had commenced to play the music for the next dance, and Wolff came to claim Edith as a partner.

Edith determined, however, to learn more

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of the terms of the will referred to, and while dancing with Wolff asked him suddenly:

"Mr. Wolff, what does it mean to 'probate' a will?"

"Is her ladyship going to make a will?" he asked in surprise.

"I am trying to get some information, but I guess it's not in your line," she said shortly.

"No, I guess it is more in the line of your legal friend from the country."

"Yes, I guess it is, thank you." and the dance was finished in silence.

Edith did not get an opportunity to question Washburne later in the evening as she had hoped. Washburne and his cousin Alice left about midnight to take the train for home, having previously arranged to meet Amy at the depot.

"I've had a most delightful time, Edith," said Alice when leaving.

"I am glad you did, Alice; but I did not think it such a success as your party. Really I am disappointed, and again, I have a bone to pick with your cousin."

"Why, Joe!" exclaimed Alice. "How did you offend Edith?"

"That's all right," answered Edith as

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Washburne attempted to explain. "I wanted to know something he knew all about and he wouldn't tell me. But I'll find out all right. You can tell Alice and she'll tell me," she added laughingly.

As they made their way to the depot Joe repeated to his cousin the conversation he had had with Edith.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Alice. "I guess grandma is right about the kind of a man her father is. Joe, I don't believe that girl knew about her mother's will. She certainly ought to know, and if she asks me I'll tell her the truth about it."

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CHAPTER XIV

THE GRAFTON NEWS



RED WOLFF'S father, Russell Wolff, had come to Grafton some twenty years before the opening of our story. He had purchased the Grafton News, which at that time was a weekly paper. The city of Grafton was entering upon a boom at that time, with the coming of the new railroads, and he soon commenced to issue the News as a semi-weekly, which afterward developed into a daily.

He early associated himself with men like Renard and Ross, who had but recently organized the Street Railway Company, and the various improvement projects, and as a result he had been favored with a profitable line of printing in the job department of his establishment, as well as a liberal advertising patronage.

Many newspapers had been started in Grafton, but none had proven profitable, and whenever a printer endeavored to engage in the printing business exclusively he found

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little encouragement. As a consequence the News Publishing Company had become quite a prosperous concern. It was equipped with a modern web press, two typesetting machines for the daily paper, and a complete bindery was operated in conjunction with its job printing department.

The News Publishing Company had been organized by Russell Wolff soon after the News was published as a daily, and among the stockholders were Renard and Ross. The elder Wolff held the controlling interest.

Fred Wolf had grown up in his father's establishment, learning the various details of the business, and upon his father's death about two years before, he had assumed full control of the management of the paper, advised from time to time by Renard and the latter's business associates.

After his mother's death, which occurred the year following, he had made his home at the hotel. With his mother's death he had come into possession of a small block of stock in the Street Railway Company, which his father had acquired years before, and presented to his wife.

To all outward appearances Wolff was comfortably situated, and many matrons

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with marriageable daughters looked upon him as a desirable son-in-law. But his association with men so much older than himself, and an inclination to be more or less overbearing, had alienated many of the younger set in Grafton.

The previous fall, when the Republican county convention was in session, he had been selected as a delegate, not because of his popularity, but because of his position as editor of the News. He had opposed the nomination of Joseph Washburne as state's attorney, but when the vote was taken only one-half of the delegates from Grafton had stood by him, while Washburne had the united support of the balance of the county.

Wolff never explained to anyone why he was opposed to Washburne, but the delegates thought that inasmuch as Grafton had been recognized on the ticket when it was represented by the candidates for county judge and county treasurer, the balance of the county should be represented by the candidates for sheriff and state's attorney.

Wolff, therefore, was not pleased to meet Washburne at Edith's party the previous evening, and while so far there was nothing

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definite or serious in his attentions to the mayor's daughter, he was considerably piqued by her evident preference for Washburne's company to his own.

On the Friday morning after the party he was thinking over a number of incidents that had occurred since Edith's return from Ripton, and then he suddenly remembered that she had not sent him one of her invitations for the evening before, but he had gone as a matter of course. Could it have been an oversight? He knew the mayor expected him, and why should he try to puzzle out whether or not he had broken any of the rules of etiquette?

Not until the evening before had he thought anything different but that Edith was his whenever he chose to say the word. He knew her father would not oppose such an alliance, and with his self-assurance he never for one instant dreamed that Edith would have any different views on the matter. What really had concerned him was the question, did he want her? He had always admired her beauty, talents and accomplishments, but not until after her return from Ripton did he see the other side of her nature.

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As Grandma Washburne had expressed it, "the sap was on the rise", but it was not for Fred Wolff.

He was seated at his desk in the business office, looking over the morning mail, when William Sayers, the city clerk, entered.

"'Morning, Fred," was his greeting. Here's the copy for the ballots."

"I thought we were to have that copy last Tuesday. We'll have to hustle some to give those to you Monday morning," commented Wolff.

"Well, I've done the best I could. There are so many independent candidates for aldermen in some of the wards that I had some difficulty in deciding their proper places on the ticket. In the Fourth ward, for instance, there's five independent candidates, and every one of them wanted to go to the head of the ticket. We finally settled it by letting them draw lots for place. How do things look to you?"

"Oh, all right. What do you know? You look kind of serious."

"Fred, was you to Renard's blow-out last night?"

"Yes, I went to the dance."

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Were some of those club women there in the evening?"

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Well, I think Renard has made the biggest fool play any man could make."

"How's that?"

"They tell me that he invited the club women for the afternoon, and then had that dance for his daughter in the evening. Is that so?"

"The club women were invited for the afternoon, but some evidently made a mistake and came in the evening. But what of that? They were well entertained."

"Bad play, Fred, and I think we are going to get it in the neck on account of it, from what I've heard. But get busy on those ballots. Hustle over the specimen ballots as soon as you can, so we can instruct the boys. By the way, Fred, you understand that you will have to print a double quantity of the official ballots?"

"Yes, on account of the women's vote."

"That's right. And now I have to chase up that tinsmith for the ballot boxes."

"What's that?" exclaimed Wolff, "Tinsmith for ballot boxes, how's that?"

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"Well, not tin. Galvanized iron, with a hasp and padlock. You understand, Fred, that with the women's vote, we had to make twenty-four precincts of the seven wards, where before we only had twelve. Well, that means more ballot boxes, and the quickest way to get them was to have them made of galvanized iron. There's only one cabinet shop in town and it would take him four or five weeks to make them of wood."

"Doesn't the law require that they be made of wood?" asked Wolff.

"No. Nothing in the law as to what material they are to be made of. The only requirement is that it shall be in full view of the voter, and locked. So we are having them made of galvanized iron."

The foreman of the job room came into the office at this moment, and Wolff handed the copy of the ballots to him.

"Rush on that, Stevens," he said. "Have a ticket made out for it. We have got to get it finished by to-morrow night if we work overtime to do it."

"It means overtime all right, Mr. Wolff, even if I did cop onto a tramp printer who happened along this morning."

"Got another man?" asked Wolff.

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"Yes, he blew in this morning, and I was looking for these ballots to come along, so I put him to work cleaning up in the meantime."

"That's good," answered Wolff.

Little did Wolff know what an important part the "tramp" printer referred to would play in the coming election. Fate spins strange threads that ultimately become a part of the warp or woof that is woven into one's lives

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CHAPTER XV

JIM'S ARRIVAL IN GRAFTON



OCCUPYING one of the most prominent corners on the main street of Grafton was a two-story and basement building housing the News Publishing Company. On the main floor, which was reached by a number of steps from the street, was located the business office, the job department and the bindery. The top floor was used by the editorial department and the composing room for the daily.

When the new rotary web press was installed it was set up in the basement, and the newsboys entered by a stairway off the side street. The employees of the establishment entered the building through a stairway close by, but toward the front of the building. This door was fastened by a latch lock that could be opened from the inside without a key.

It was a habit with the employees to leave the key to this door hanging on a nail near the entrance to the basement, so that the first

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one to arrive in the morning could unlock the door. This side door opened directly into the bindery. Further to the front was the job composing room, while the other side of the building was occupied by the job presses. The business office was partitioned off from the mechanical department, and the door in the center of the partition was always locked when the front door on the main street was locked.

Access to the composing room on the second floor, as well as to the editorial rooms, could be obtained either through the business office, or by the stairway leading up from the job composing room.

It was about seven o'clock on the morning after Edith's party that a man hardly thirty years of age was standing by this side entrance to the News office smoking a briar pipe. The morning was chilly, and the light weight overcoat which he wore was turned up at the collar. His shoes and hat were dusty, but his face was clean, and the keen eyes seemed to make a complete inventory of everything that attracted their attention.

When a young man turned the corner of the street, stopped by the stairway leading to the basement and then opened the side

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door, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, put it in the pocket of his coat and followed him inside.

"What's the show for work?" he asked.

"Printer or pressman?" asked the other.

"Printer," laconically. "Operator or job work, all the same to me. How many machines have you here?"

"Just two. Keep two regulars on those all the time. Pretty busy in the job room. Better stick around until the foreman comes. I think he'll put you on. Come from the city?"

"Yes, got in during the night. First stop out."

"How's things in the city?"

"Bum. I decided to get out early. A fellow stands a better show. Many tourists come along yet?"

"No, you're the first one this season."

"Maybe I'll strike something steady, then. Pretty nice little burg this is."

"Never here before, eh?"

"No, this is my first visit."

"There's Stevens now."

The foreman nodded his head to the stranger, who was standing by one of the imposing stones, hung up his hat and coat,

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rolled up his sleeves, put on his apron, and while tying the strings, walked over toward him.

"You a job compositor?" he asked.

"Yes, or operator."

"Well, they don't need anyone upstairs, but I'm expecting a big job in today, and it'll be in a rush when it comes. You can hang up your hat and coat over there."

The stranger had been kept busy for an hour or so unlocking some forms and distributing, when Stevens came out of the business office with a quantity of manuscript in his hand.

"Now, we've got to get busy," he announced. "Here's a time ticket for you. Got a pencil? All right. Keep your time accurately. Give me your name on this slip, so I can turn it in at the front office, and get your name on the ghost sheet."

The name the stranger wrote was

"JIM GOODMAN."

"Ever work on election ballots?" asked the foreman.

"Yes," answered Jim. "I've tackled about everything. Show me the cases, and I'll do the rest."

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"We'll run the specimen ballots first," explained Stevens," and then run the official ballots afterward. Walter will help you," indicating the young man that he had first met in the morning.

Stevens soon recognized in Jim a very competent workman, and was thankful that he had happened along that morning. At noon he came over to where he was working and after glancing over his work he said:

"We take an hour at noon; most every one here goes home to dinner. Got lunch money?"

"Yes, but I'll have to draw to-night for supper and bed money," answered Jim.

"Where are you stopping?"

"No place, yet," he answered with a grin. "Just landed here this morning."

The afternoon passed without incident. The job room of the News was a pleasant place to work. Stevens and the other compositor were busy on a catalogue for one of the factories, and Jim with Walter's assistance devoted their entire time to printing the ballots. Once during the afternoon Wolff came into the room to see how the work was progressing and to get a few of the specimen ballots to take over to the city hall.

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It was late in the afternoon, when Stevens, after a visit to the up-stairs, or daily composing room, came over to where Jim was working and said:

"Jim, we're up against it now."

"How's that?"

"Well, all these ballots have to be published in tomorrow's edition of the paper, and we've got to send these forms up there before nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

"That means to print them tonight, or part of them at least," answered Jim.

"Yes," said Stevens; "but I'm short a feeder."

"I can feed for you if your pressman don't object."

"Can you feed a Gordon?"

"Sure Mike. But won't your pressman kick? In the city, you know, the Allied Trades don't allow compositors to work in the pressroom, and the pressmen are not allowed to work in the composing room. If your pressman don't object, I'll feed."

"He won't object," assured Stevens. "Furthermore, you're helping him out. It's time and a half after seven o'clock."

And that night Jim fed the press until

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nearly eleven o'clock, when all the specimen ballots had been printed.

"Well," said the foreman, "we'll call that a day's work. After the daily is off tomorrow we'll put three presses on the official ballots, and clean them up before midnight all right. Monday the girls can count and seal them, and we'll get them delivered before noon. By the way, Jim, where you stopping?"

"What's the matter with me bunking here?" asked Jim.

"Nothing at all; if you want to. The rats may bother you some."

"If it's the four-legged kind, I won't mind. It's the two-legged rats I haven't any use for. I'll get a cup of coffee and a sandwich and come back."

"I'll show you where the key is, and after unlocking the door, hang it back on the nail. Some of the boys may show up in the morning before you wake up."

The ballots were all printed by eleven-thirty Saturday night. Early in the afternoon Stevens had come over to where Jim was working, and handed him an envelope with his pay.

"I had the bookkeeper make up your time until midnight," he explained. "I don't

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think I'll have anything for you Monday, I'm sorry to say."

"That's too bad," said Jim. "I like this burg. Say, what about this other paper? Suppose there's any chance over there?"

"What, the Independent?"

Jim nodded.

"I don't know how they are fixed over there," answered Stevens. "You can stay over if you want to and hit them Monday morning. Everything is hand set over there. If you want to bunk here until then you can do so. You know where the key is."

Jim thanked him and went on with his work.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE AWAKENING OF EDITH.



EDITH did not make her appearance at the breakfast table the morning following her party. In response to her father's inquiry, Mrs. Eaton informed him that she had complained of not feeling well.

"I guess she's tired after so much company last night," laughed Renard.

"Yes sir," answered the prim housekeeper, "she needs rest. I expect she'll be down by lunch time, sir."

Until well into the morning hours Edith had tossed restlessly, vainly endeavoring to woo the god Morpheus. Whenever she did drop off into fitful slumber, it was only to awake with the thought in her mind "you are your own mistress. Your grandmother left you well provided for."

Why hadn't she been told so before? she questioned? Why this mystery? Well, she would go to sleep now, and ask her father in the morning.

Finally exhausted with her attempts to

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solve the riddle, she passed off into unconsciousness and dreamed that she was dancing through a sugar grove with a handsome young man with two jugs over his shoulder fastened together with a strap. She could not understand why it was that the jugs seemed so continually to be in the way, until she noticed the clumsy shoes that encased her feet. When she awoke it was nearly lunch time.

"Well, how is my little suffragette after yesterday's good work?" asked her father.

"Tired, papa," she answered.

"Well, we had a fine time, didn't we? The best people in town here. Edith, it was a grand success." But his enthusiasm was not contagious so far as Edith was concerned. "Don't you think so?" he asked, abruptly.

"No, papa, I don't. I wanted to have an old-fashioned party like the girls up to Rip-ton, and it wasn't like that at all. Not nearly as much fun."

"Oh, those kind of parties are for children," laughed her father. "You're grown up, quite a young lady now, isn't she, Mrs. Eaton?"

"Indeed she is, sir."

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"Old enough to be my own mistress, I suppose," commented Edith.

"Yes," laughed her father, "old enough to be your own mistress."

"Papa," rather timidly, "what were the terms of Grandma Renard's will?"

"Why, eh—what did you say, Edith?" All traces of mirth disappeared from his countenance, as he looked at her in surprise.

"Why, grandma's will; to whom did she leave her property when she died?" asked Edith, nervously.

"To her heirs, of course; why do you ask such a question?"

"Was my name mentioned in her will?" Edith was astonished at her own boldness.

"Yes, yes;" in surprise. "But why all these questions?"

"Why, papa," she answered, having now gained more confidence in herself, "You said I was grown up, and I want to know about things."

"Well, we'll talk about that some other time. I must go back to the office now," and he appeared to be glad of an opportunity to dismiss the subject.

Hurrying out of the house, he did not wait for a car, but walked down the street

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in deep thought, chewing the end of his unlighted cigar.

"Edith has grown up," he thought to himself. "Who has been talking to her about her grandmother's will, I wonder? Let me see," and he stood pondering. "That house is hers, of course, then there's the stock in the Street Railway Company and the Improvement Company bonds. Of course she's of age, and I should have turned it over long before this; but then, what's the difference? I wonder, though, who has been talking to her?"

"Hello, George, what's the matter, standing here as if you were lost?"

It was Ross who spoke. He was returning from lunch and Renard had happened to stop but a short distance from the corner of his street.

"Hello, Frank. I was just thinking."

"Well, we need to do some thinking, all right. Say, that blow-out of yours yesterday has cooked our goose all right."

"Eh! How's that?" was the surprised inquiry. "Here comes a car; tell me what you mean."

When they were seated in the car Ross explained to Renard that his wife and

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daughter had told him at lunch time that many of the club members were very much offended by the way the invitations had been sent out. They claimed that favoritism had been shown by inviting some in the afternoon and others in the evening.

"Oh, nonsense, Frank. They got mixed in their dates, that's all. Some came in the evening that were expected in the afternoon, it is true, but we had exactly the same refreshments, and the same entertainment. I can't understand why there should be any kick about that," said Renard, impatiently.

"No, George, I suppose you can't understand. You can't handle the women's vote like you do the men's vote, you know. But we've got some hard work to do before next Tuesday." And with these parting words they alighted from the car.

As soon as Renard arrived at his office he called up Wolff, and asked him to come over and see him, and requested that he bring over some of the specimen ballots.

"Well, Fred, that was some blow-out we had last night, don't you think?" He was anxious to make himself believe that everything was running smoothly.

"Yes, Mr. Renard, it was, all right."

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But Renard mistrusted that the answer was not as favorable as he would like it.

"Well, wasn't it?" he asked sharply. "What was wrong with it?"

"Nothing, only your daughter didn't seem to be fully pleased with the arrangement we had made."

"No? Did she say anything to you?"

"Not about the party," answered Wolff, slowly.

"What then?"

"Really nothing in particular, except that when I claimed my dance after she had been talking to Washburne she seemed excited over something, and asked me a queer question."

"What was that?"

"She asked what was meant by probating a will. I laughed, and asked her if she was going to make her will, and she didn't like it, that's all."

"Ha, ha," laughed Renard, somewhat nervously, it is true, but Wolff did not suspect what was in his mind. "Fred, my boy, the women of today ask queer questions, don't they? It beats all how they want to know about things that our mothers always

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considered was a man's business. We've got to humor their whims, I suppose. You'd better jolly them along in the paper from now 'till election, don't you think?"

"Yes, and we'll have to get the boys busy too," answered Wolff.

"That's right. Line 'em up, and we'll win all right."

After Wolff's departure Renard took a small memorandum book from a pigeon hole in his desk, and turned over the closely written pages.

"What does it mean to probate a will, eh?" he mused. "And she was talking to Washburne. So that is the way the wind blows. Of course he'd know the terms of that will, but what business is that of his, I'd like to know? He'd better 'tend to his job of state's attorney."

Page after page of the memorandum book he thumbed over. Finally taking a pad of paper he started to make some calculations.

"Let's see," he mused, turning to the pages in the front of the book. "There was \$100,000 to start with. That was invested in bank stocks and city bonds. Yes—ha, here it is! Sold the bank stock and invested proceeds in the Street Railway bonds. In-

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vested the proceeds of the city bonds in Street Railway stock. That's all right. Afterward, when the Railway Company bonds were paid, I invested the proceeds in the Improvement Company bonds. That's all right. Well, I haven't time to make out a statement, but I've got it down there all right, if I have to give her an accounting. The Railway Company's stock is worth its face value, and more if we win this election."

And thus reassuring himself that he had performed his duties honestly, he dismissed the matter from his mind.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE CAMPAIGN OF THE REFORMERS



WHEN Dick had first assumed control of the Independent its editorial columns were devoted almost entirely to articles of a miscellaneous nature. During Reynold's management there had hardly appeared an original article in the editorial columns. The two columns set aside for editorials had always been filled with what newspaper men and printers styled "boiler plate," stereotype matter obtained from the larger cities and mounted on a metal base furnished by the press associations. These stereotype plates came in convenient lengths and being only one-sixth of an inch thick they could be easily divided at the bottom of a column, or wherever the editor desired. They were very convenient for filling up the paper, and were very much cheaper than setting the type. Whenever this kind of "editorial" matter was used in a number of papers, "public opinion" was con-

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sidered unanimous—or in the words of a literary writer “critics agreed.”

One week, however, just before Dick had come to Grafton, the editorial column of the paper contained an article on the “Glorious Art of Self Defense,” written by Dick’s predecessor in the mechanical department of the paper, and inserted in the editorial column. Reynolds was away on a trip that week, and the paper had been left to take care of itself.

The next week, when Reynolds returned, his attention was called to the article, and he wrote a most scathing condemnation of prize-fighting, in order to even up matters. The writer of the first article feeling very much chagrined over this lack of appreciation of his literary efforts, resigned and as a result Dick was engaged to take his place.

After Dick had assumed the ownership of the paper, and placed his name at the head of the editorial column, the Independent published real editorials. In the county election of the previous fall, it was acknowledged that the editorials in the Independent had contributed materially to the election of County Judge Bryce and County Treasurer Kleine on the Democratic ticket, while the county had been carried for the

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Republican party on the state and national ticket.

Up to the time of the starting of the daily, Dick had confined his editorial columns to the discussion of state and national affairs, but with the first issue of the daily local matters were discussed in a manner that was startling to the people of Grafton. In addition to setting forth the reasons why the Reform ticket should be supported by the voters, he discussed the entire problem of street car transportation—called attention to the fact that the franchise on Main street would expire during the coming year, and that it should not be renewed without a compensation clause.

On the Friday evening before election there was a gathering of the clans in the office of the Independent. Dixon was the first to arrive, followed almost immediately by Sloan, Craig and Jackson.

"Well, boys!" exclaimed Sloan, his loud voice reverberating through the room, "we've got 'em on the run!"

"Do you think so, Mark?" asked Craig.

"Sure, we have. Let me tell you a joke. You know that there's quite a number of col-

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ored votes in my ward, and I've made them solid for you, Craig."

"How's that?"

"Well, the colored Methodists had a chicken dinner last week, and they went around for donations. Sayers was 'pan-handled' among the rest and he sent up a couple of birds as his donation, and they were sore about it, believe me."

"Why? What was the matter? They couldn't expect a coop full of chickens from him."

"Wait, 'till I tell the story," answered Sloan. "Of course you have heard that the boys have a little sport down at South Grafton with some of their prize birds. Well, it seems that Hugh Johnson, the expressman, is master of ceremonies on these occasions, and Sayers heard of it. So Sayers arranges with Hugh to bring him up a couple of the birds that have been put out of commission, then he sends them to the market and has them dressed, and delivered to the colored parson as his donation."

"Why!" exclaimed several of his audience, "they wouldn't be fit to eat!"

"Fit to eat," answered Sloan, "of course not. They were nothing but bones and

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gristle. The colored parson very ceremoniously thanked Sayers for his donation, but advised him to buy his meats at another market. You bet those niggers are sore."

"I heard something about that," spoke up Jackson. "I also heard that Sayers said he was tired of their eternally asking for donations, and that's why he did it."

"Yes," answered Sloan, "and I'm helping the story along by giving them to understand that Sayers don't need their votes. Now, tomorrow night the colored Baptists are going to have a chicken dinner, and I've ordered two dozen nice yellow legged Plymouth Rocks to be sent up there with Craig's compliments. Get me? Wise move, eh?"

"That's good of you, Sloan," said Craig. "But why not with the compliments of all of us?"

"Coarse work, my boy; coarse work. If they vote for you, they'll vote the whole Reform ticket. See? Say, Jackson, what have you and Dixon done for tomorrow night?"

"Got everything fixed. We've rented the opera house and are going to have a moving picture show for both afternoon and evening," answered Jackson.

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"Afternoon and evening!" exclaimed Sloan. "Why afternoon?"

"For the children," explained Jackson.

"What do you want with the kids? They don't vote."

"That was Bevan's and Dixon's idea. Explain it to him, Dick."

Dick picked up a copy of that evening's Independent, and pointed to an advertisement on the front page, occupying a space of three columns across and a half column deep, headed:

"FREE SHOWS—

AFTERNOON AND EVENING."

"Now," explained Dick, "we will have a special set of reels for the children in the afternoon. There will be three shows; the first one at one o'clock, the second at two-thirty, and the third at four o'clock. Five reels will be shown, and between each reel we will have lantern slides booming the candidates. In the evening only one show will be given, from seven-thirty until ten-thirty, with a different set of reels, and between the reels the candidates will make their speeches."

"The evening show is all right, but why the afternoon business?" objected Sloan.

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"Don't you understand, Sloan, that the afternoon show is as much for the women as the children? A lot of women will come with the kids in the afternoon, and we do good work with the lantern slides between the acts," explained Dixon.

"I get you!" exclaimed Sloan. "That will offset the Renard sore-eye of last Thursday."

"You don't pronounce it right," laughed Dixon.

"Well, I guess that bunch is calling it 'sore-eye,' all right," was Sloan's rejoinder. There's a lot of sore-heads as a result of it, from what I hear. But here, what's this: 'Mrs. R. W. Pickrell will deliver an address especially to the women voters of Grafton'," he read from the advertisement. "Who's she?"

"Ask Dick or Dixon. They're the ladies' men in this campaign," said Jackson.

"Mrs. Pickrell is one of the women who engineered the womans' suffrage bill through the legislature. I heard she was going through here, and Dixon and I made arrangements for her to stop over Saturday night to address this meeting. You see, it will encourage the women here to come out and vote Tuesday," explained Dick.

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"Good stunt! Good stunt!" exclaimed Sloan. "And she'll tell the women to vote the Reform ticket."

"No, nothing of the kind. She will not advise them how to vote. She said her only advice would be that they get out on election day and vote, and she didn't care how they voted as long as they voted. And another condition is that she is to speak last."

"I don't like that," said Sloan, peevishly. "That's always the way with a woman. Give her a platform to talk from, get the crowd together, and they must have the last word. We want her to talk in support of our ticket. That's what we want. What's the matter with some of our home talent addressing the meeting. Haven't we any women in Grafton who will address the meeting?"

"No," answered Dixon. "They're too timid. Can't you see, Sloan, that Mrs. Pickrell is a big drawing card? The fact that she is speaking at a meeting arranged by the reform forces is almost an endorsement of our candidates?"

"Well, there may be something in that. If we can get a little more than half of the women's vote our ticket is elected," agreed Sloan.

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The Saturday night meeting at the Opera House was a grand success. The auditorium was filled with a most enthusiastic crowd, the majority of those present being women. It was Amy who had learned that Mrs. Pickrell was on a trip that would cause her to pass through Grafton. She had immediately communicated with Dick, and had advised him to arrange for her to make an address there, under the auspices of the reform ticket. Amy had never met this bright and shining light in the suffrage movement, and deciding not to let this opportunity pass, she arrived in Grafton early in the afternoon.

As Dick had promised to go back to Rip-ton with her that night, and Mrs. Pickrell and her husband would take the same train, she was delighted with this opportunity of becoming better acquainted with this modern Joan of Arc.

"And you'll have over an hour's ride after we leave you," Amy said in a tone of commiseration to Mrs. Pickrell.

"Don't pity me, Miss Comstock. I feel more than fully repaid for my stop at Grafton. It was such a splendid meeting. But I didn't know you were so interested in the Grafton election," she added archly. "Did

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you convert Mr. Bevan to our cause, may I ask?"

"Indeed, no," answered Amy, proudly. "Mr. Bevan was for woman suffrage long before I ever met him."

Mrs. Pickrell extended her hand to Dick with the words: "Mr. Bevan, if I had known that, I might have been willing to have said more in favor of the ticket you are supporting in your paper. Mr. Pickrell also was in favor of woman suffrage long before I met him."

"Then I shall shake hands with Mr. Pickrell," gaily laughed Amy.

As their hands crossed, Mrs. Pickrell smiled, and leaning over she whispered in Amy's ear, "do you believe in signs?"

Amy blushed, but she was not offended by the idea suggested by the remark; in fact she was highly elated at the favorable reflection upon Dick that was implied.

"I understand," said Dick, "that you had a hard time getting the governor to sign the bill."

"Well, yes, and no," smiled Mrs. Pickrell. "We went to the state capital and stayed right there until he signed it."

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"He took his time about it," remarked Dick, resentfully.

"That's what I say," said Mr. Pickrell. "And what makes me tired is the way he plumes himself before the women of the state, and says he always was for woman suffrage."

"Now, dear, you know he was in doubt as to whether it was constitutional or not," remonstrated his wife.

"Constitutional!" exploded Mr. Pickrell. "Constitutional! It wasn't for him to decide that. He wasn't elected a judge of the supreme court. His is an executive office, and if he is in favor of an act passed by the legislature it is up to him to sign it, and leave it to the courts to decide as to its constitutionality."

"I agree with you on that point," remarked Dick. "I believe that when the majority of the people, through their representatives, express their wishes by passing certain laws, then the will of the people should be respected. There is too much playing 'hide and seek' under the cloak of 'constitutionality.' "

"Oh, if you men were only as progressive as you are aggressive," said Mrs. Pickrell

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gleefully. "And why, Mr. Bevan, are you such an ardent champion of woman suffrage?"

"Purely selfish motives, I suppose you would say," he answered slowly. "I am interested in a number of reforms, and I do not expect we will get them until the women vote."

"And why?"

"Because women naturally consider the moral side of a reform rather than its expediency. When a man votes for a candidate for public office, he is influenced more by the individual's personality than what he stands for. A woman wants to know what he is going to do for the public in payment for the salary he draws from the public treasury. Smith votes for Jones because he belongs to the same lodge or club or organization, or maybe one of Smith's friends will be appointed to some minor office if Jones is elected, and so it goes all along the line."

"Or in other words, a woman believes in getting her money's worth?" inquired Mr. Pickrell.

"Yes, you might put it that way. She is a natural bargain hunter. A public officer is a public servant, and she believes he should earn his salary. For instance, if his duty

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is to see that the garbage is removed every so often, and this is not done, she wants to know the reason why. On the other hand, a man will find some way of disposing of it himself, rather than bother to argue with the health department, overlooking the fact that he has paid for certain services that have not been rendered."

"You don't mean that we are more quarrelsome than men, do you?" asked Mrs. Pickrell.

"No, indeed, far from it. In fact, just the opposite. If a man gets into an argument over his rights or privileges, he resorts to his fists as a means of settling the matter. The woman, on the other hand, calls in the police, recognizing naturally that the duty of the police primarily is to maintain order in the community."

"Do I understand, then, that we men have been too negligent of our duties as citizens?" asked Mr. Pickrell.

"Men have been too busy earning a living or making money to study the duties of government. Their interest in politics has extended no further than the inquiry, 'how will this affect my business?' On the other hand, women have been inquiring as to what

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becomes of the enormous sums collected in taxes? How is it spent? Who gets it, and what for? She has more time to inquire into those matters."

"Well, I will admit that Mrs. Pickrell is better posted than I am on a good many matters," commented her husband. "I'll read about a certain matter in the papers, and then forget all about it when it comes election day, but she'll have all the facts and figures right hot off the bat."

"That's because we have been trained to it, dear. All our life we have to keep telling you, 'don't do this,' 'don't do that.' I suppose it comes from the fact that we are always doing the same thing over and over, like washing dishes three times a day; baking, sweeping, cleaning, washing, week in and week out. And so in reforms, we have to keep up the same monotonous admonitions to you men until you do it for the sake of peace;" and she laughed indulgently.

"You're not saying a word, Miss Comstock," said Mr. Pickrell.

"No, but I'm doing a heap of listening," laughed Amy, her eyes shining like stars.

"And thinking," commented Dick.

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CHAPTER XVIII

COMSTOCK'S SUNDAY SERMON



THE Sunday breakfast table at the Comstock home had always been agreed upon as the time and place for reviewing the successes and failures, the triumphs and disappointments of the members of the family during the past week.

It was also the time and place when plans for the future were discussed and decisions were made. Although both Mr. and Mrs. Comstock were members of the Congregational Church, and Amy took an active interest in church work, while Bill sang in the choir, these Sunday morning discussions and conferences were considered of more importance than regular religious services.

It had been at one of these Sunday morning conferences that it had been decided that Amy should devote her time to working in the Gazette office, and that her mother should employ someone to assist her in the house. Also when George believed that he had had

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enough schooling to carry him through life, it had been decided that he would be allowed to leave school on condition that his next five years should be spent in the printing office—his father remarking at the time that if he was not willing to go to a regular college that he would have to go to the “poor boy’s college” as Horace Greeley had called the training one received in a printing office. Bill had said George was lazy and nothing but a nuisance around the office, and the controversy was only settled by George agreeing to follow Amy’s instructions during their father’s absence, instead of being under the domination of Bill.

Since Christmas it had happened a number of times that Dick had visited at the Comstock home Saturday evening, and consequently had been present at several of these family conferences. Whenever this had happened the conversation had become considerably tinctured with his personal and business affairs.

Consequently on this Sunday morning the family were considerably interested in the result of the meeting of the evening before in Grafton. After Amy had given a

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most glowing account of her experiences, George broke out with—

"Huh! One would think you were the whole cheese down there."

"Well," said Dick, "I guess it was as much Amy's meeting as mine, or anyone's else for that matter. I never would have thought of having Mrs. Pickrell address the meeting, and that was the big drawing card."

"Now, Mr. Smartie, will that do you?" laughed Amy.

"Oh, yes; when you get to running things down to Grafton like you do around here you'll be satisfied, I suppose," was the disgruntled answer.

"That's enough of that kind of talk, son," admonished his father. "We'll give you a chance to 'run things', as you call it, when you show a more willing disposition to get things done."

"Yes, and to earn the money you are getting every week," said Bill.

"That's all right," was the answer, "but some day I'll do something that will make you all proud of me."

"Let it be soon," wearily from Bill.

"Amy, do look at that clock!" exclaimed Mrs. Comstock. Aren't you going to get

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ready for Sunday School? You promised Grace Benson to take her class today."

"Yes, I know. Dick, you and papa are coming to church, aren't you?"

"Maybe Dick will and maybe he won't," answered her father, as they rose from the table. "I feel like delivering a sermon myself today, with Dick as the congregation."

"I feel that I ought to stay at home, and see that you stick by your text."

"No, you run along, and tell the children all about Jonah and the whale," said Mr. Comstock, as he led Dick into the front room.

"There is one good thing about my services, Dick," handing him a cigar; "I do not place any ban on smoking. Now, seriously, how are you coming with the daily?"

"Why, fairly well."

" 'Fairly well,' Dick, I take to mean that it isn't paying expenses yet. Am I right?"

"It doesn't pay expenses yet, but I think it will soon," was the hopeful answer.

"How soon, Dick?"

"When we get more advertising, and I think we will with the opening up of spring."

"But can you keep the cow alive while you are waiting for the grass to grow? Your

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semi-weekly is doing well, but I am inclined to think that all the profits from that source are being used to keep the daily alive."

"That's about the size of it," was the rueful reply.

"But isn't it the truth?" was the persistent inquiry.

"Yes;" was the reluctant admission.

"Now, Dick, my boy," continued Comstock, kindly, "don't think I am trying to pry into your personal affairs, or catechising you too severely. But I have been watching the Independent ever since you took hold of it, and nothing pleased me more than the success you are making of it. In fact, it makes me feel young again."

"Young again?" inquired Dick, in surprise.

"Yes. All that you are going through to get that paper back onto its feet, I myself went through with the Gazette. I might say that I have been in the newspaper business since I was nine years old, and," running his fingers through his hair, which was just beginning to be tinged with silver threads, "that is something over forty years.

"When I was nine years old I borrowed three cents of my mother and bought six

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copies of the Chicago Daily News. After selling them at one cent per copy, and paying back the loan I had negotiated, I had a capital of three cents, with which I bought six more papers the following evening. The Daily News at that time marked a new era in journalism. Before the News was published all evening papers were either three or five cents per copy, and only well-to-do people could afford to indulge in a daily paper. The people around where I lived were mostly working people, and I soon had quite a newspaper route; that is, I had about fifty regular customers. I understood afterward that the proprietors of the paper had to import pennies from the Philadelphia mint in order to make change for the five and ten cent pieces that were the smallest coin then in circulation in Chicago. People were too proud in those days to handle pennies. Soon I had other boys delivering for me, and then I learned that if I went to the office direct I could buy my supply much cheaper. So every evening after school I went down town and brought up the papers, not only for my own customers, but also for the other boys. I believe it was something like three hundred papers or more that I would get, but as the

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paper at that time was only four pages, it was not so much of a load. These papers cost me forty cents per hundred, and after paying ten cents carfare, the trip netted me twenty cents, in addition to what I made from the delivery of papers to my own customers.

"I shall never forget one evening, when I was kept after school for some misdemeanor, and could not convince the teacher that the fate of the nation depended on my getting those papers, but Mr. Gladson was inexorable, and that night three hundred families went without the Daily News.

"In those days the papers had to be folded by hand, and as soon as a boy received his allowance, he would clear a space on the sidewalk to fold his papers. The Sunday papers were the same. They came to us in lots of ten, like the News, and we had to fold them ourselves. To fold the Sunday paper we needed a space of about six feet square, although it was only eight pages, if I remember rightly, and seven columns to the page. Of course you know, Dick, that in those days the paper was wet before it was printed, so the ink would assimilate with the paper more readily."

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"Like you would with the old Washington hand press."

"Exactly. Here is a copy of the old Chicago Times," continued Mr. Comstock, taking a bunch of old papers from a drawer in the book case. "Look at it—nearly forty years since that paper was printed, yet the printing shows up as clear as when it first came off the press. I wonder sometimes with our modern machinery and methods, if you would be able to read a copy of the Gazette forty years from now, or if it would be worth reading."

"This is mighty interesting," said Dick, his eyes following down the editorial page.

"They wrote editorials those days, Dick," commented Comstock, as he looked over Dick's shoulder. "Those were the days when Storey was running the Times, and Medill the Tribune. Read that for a sample," pointing to an editorial headed "Tilden or Hayes," which read as follows:

That venerable and musty political mountebank, Joe Medill, proclaims from the school section that the Times "assumes that there is so much similarity between the Cincinnati and St. Louis platforms that there is really no issue between the two parties, and, as to the candidates, it assumes that Mr. Tilden is a better and more morally efficient man than Mr. Hayes. This is its justification for a

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dishonest allegiance to a party which it has denounced for years as a putrid reminiscence."

The musty old mountebank prevaricates; in point of fact, lies. * * * * The Times acknowledges no such allegiance; on the contrary, it repudiated, explicitly and emphatically, any and every mode, manner, or thought of allegiance to any party whatever. It is a perfectly free and independent medium of intelligence and ideas, owning no allegiance to anything but its own convictions of truth and right.

* * * * *

The Times has denounced, and hereby reiterates its denunciation of the old rock-rooted-mountain-buttressed-copper-bottomed-pro-slavery-Bourbon-confederate combination of political fossils, sometimes styled the Democratic party, as a putrid reminiscence and a political bad smell of most detestable odor.

* * * * *

What this country is badly in want of at this time is a man at the head of public affairs who is not only known to have right purposes, but who is able to make himself felt in the forwarding of right purposes.

"The demand of the times forty years ago was about the same as it is today," said Dick, as he read the last paragraph aloud.

"Yes, that is true, but what I want to call your attention to is the advertising. There's the paper—eight pages, seven columns to the page, fifty-six columns in all. Now measure up the advertising; about three and one-half columns, or less than seven per cent. Now-a-days a paper carries fifty per cent and over in advertising."

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"But these are scorching editorials. Didn't the people sit up and take notice?"

"Oh, yes, people took notice all right, and the paper was read for its political opinions; but it never had the circulation that the Tribune had, or at least I never had so many subscribers for the Times as I had for the Tribune. If I remember rightly I had two customers for the Sunday Times, and over forty for the Sunday Tribune. And why? Because the Tribune had the advertising. Women read the papers as much for the advertising as for anything else. Now there is your weak point, Dick. From a financial standpoint as well as a news point, your daily is in a critical condition. In real solid reading matter you are publishing as much news as the other paper, although they run eight pages daily while you run only four. But the people do not think they are getting as much for their money. The other four pages that the News runs is simply to carry the advertising, but this advertising is interesting reading to the women folks. Now the style of editorials that found favor some forty years ago are out of date. They were too personal. The papers of those days were too much the personal organs of certain individ-

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uals. The Times was Storey; the Tribune was Medill; the New York Tribune was Greeley, and so on. Now it is the paper. Instead of Storey saying so-and-so, we say, 'the Times says,' 'the Tribune says,' etc. The general public does not know or care who is the owner or editorial writer of the large metropolitan newspaper. The publishing of a large metropolitan daily is a business enterprise that takes an immense amount of capital. The day has gone by when a man could go into a city like Chicago, for instance, and start a daily with a few thousand dollars, as when the Daily News was started."

"I realize that, Mr. Comstock."

"I believe you do, Dick. Now, I do not want you to think that I am doing the 'I told you so' act, but you remember I said that you must have the business men with you on this daily proposition, otherwise it would not pay. The merchants in Grafton do not think there is need for another daily besides the News. Another daily means to them a double expenditure for advertising, in order to reach the same number of people. That's the way they look at it."

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"Why, Mr. Comstock, I have nearly as many subscribers as the News."

"That may be, Dick, but has the News any less than when you started."

"No, I suppose not."

"Well, then, why should the merchant advertise with you rather than with the News?"

"I am advocating what is for the best interest of the city," but even Dick could see that his argument was rather lame.

"That may be, and they may recognize that, but a hard-headed business man does not care to pay out money for advertising on what he might consider a sentimental proposition. Of course if you win this election it will give your paper considerable prestige. You will get the council proceedings to publish and all of that, if that gang does not euchre you out of them. And that reminds me, Dick, what about the delinquent tax list? When do you start on it?"

"Delinquent tax list? I don't understand, Mr. Comstock."

"Why, aren't you going to publish it?"

"Not that I know of," and Dick was completely surprised at the question.

"Well, when are you going to find out?"

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"Really, Mr. Comstock, I don't know what you mean. I publish the tax list?"

"Yes. Didn't you support Kleine; isn't he county treasurer, and hasn't he promised it to you?" and Mr. Comstock began to get excited.

"Why, no; I don't know anything about it," a look of bewilderment overspreading Dick's countenance.

"Well, I see it is time to take up the offertory. Dick, do you mean to tell me that you supported Kleine for county treasurer without any understanding from him that you were to publish the tax list?"

"Why yes; I supported him on the understanding that the interest on the county funds was to be turned into the county treasury. I understood that the giving out of the tax list was decided by the county commissioners."

"I guess my sermon is none too soon; maybe it is too late. Dick, I have a good mind to call you an idiot. Don't you know that the delinquent tax list is the best piece of advertising that a newspaper can have? Don't you know that the county treasurer has the full say as to what paper shall publish it?"

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"No. I did not."

"Well, then let me tell you. Last year the tax list figured up something like \$2,100 for the paper that published it—that was the News. This year it will run over \$3,000, if I do not miss my guess. The paper publishing it receives so much for each description—a rate set by statute. Year before last we published it, and it netted us a tidy little sum. And you say you have not seen Kleine about it?"

"No; but would he give it to me?"

"Why shouldn't he? Your's was the only paper in the county that supported him in his campaign, and he is in duty bound to give it to you. Dick, we will go right over to his office and see him at once. I know they are working on the books today because the Benson girl is in Kleine's office.

"But, Mr. Comstock, I would not be able to get it out. I understand it has be done in a rush, and I haven't the material to handle it; besides—" and Dick hesitated.

"Besides what?" and there was a note of impatience in the query.

"I haven't the money to handle it. That is, I would have to put on extra help, and it is all I can do to take care of the pay-roll now."

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"More idiocy! Dick, I am beginning to lose patience with you. The county treasurer can advance money for the publication of the list if he sees fit to do so. Now get your hat and we will go over there at once. If you like, we can set it up here, and print it, and send it down to Grafton to be used by you as a part of the Independent—the same as a ready print."

"Would that be legal?"

"Legal! Certainly. Many are the papers that have sent the copy for the tax list away to the larger cities to be set up and printed, and then used as a supplement to their regular issue."

Dick was in a bewildered state of mind as he put on his hat and coat to accompany Mr. Comstock to the county treasurer's office. He had always heard of the tax list in a vague sort of way as "good pickings" for the newspaper that published it, but the value of this kind of advertising, and the possibility that he could obtain it for his paper, was something beyond his wildest dreams. He doubted very much the possibility that Kleine would be willing to give it to him, but as Mr. Comstock said, he had first claim to it.

They found Kleine in the treasurer's office

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in the county building, near the cashier's window, supervising the work of half a dozen clerks, four of whom were girls of about Amy's age.

"Taking in money today?" was Comstock's greeting.

"Hello Comstock, and Bevan, too. Well, you haven't come to pay your taxes today, I hope?" was the surprised greeting.

"Well, I'm always ready to take money," laughed Comstock; "and I suppose you are—even if it be Sunday."

"I wouldn't object to taking their money for taxes if it was tendered to me, but the people of Washburne County are too God-fearing to offer it. We are working today to get the books in shape to write up the list for the printer," explained Kleine.

"Considerably behind, are you?" asked Dick.

"The list is large this year—largest ever known in the county. I allowed the town collectors to keep their books over the time limit so the tax-payers would not have to come here to pay their taxes, and as a result we are working nights and Sundays."

"The voters ought to appreciate that when you run for some other office," commented

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Comstock. "When are you going to have the copy ready for Dick?"

"Why-w-w-h-h-what do you mean?"

"Oh, of course the Independent is going to publish the list, and we are going to set the type and print it in the Gazette office; then send the sheets down to him to be used as a supplement to his paper;" Comstock's matter-of-fact way completely disarmed Kleine. "You see," he continued, "I want to make my arrangements so that we will be sure to get it out on time. Let's see; there's only four weeks left."

Kleine looked up at the calendar, meditatively tapped with his pencil, before replying.

"Yes, just about. Come into my private office. I'll open the door at the far end of the corridor."

As Dick and Comstock walked toward the door designated, the latter whispered: "We will have to make a bold play; there's a nigger in the woodpile somewhere."

"I'll follow your lead," was the answer.

After ushering his visitors into the small room that was marked "private" Kleine closed the door into the larger room where the clerks were at work.

"Sit down; make yourselves at home. I

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believe I've some cigars left," pulling a box out of the drawer of his desk. "And so you've got it all arranged for the publishing of the list?"

"Yes; the next thing is to get the copy," smiled Comstock, puffing at the cigar he had taken from the box, and tendering a light to Kleine.

The county treasurer puffed away at his cigar while he leaned back in his chair. His arms were folded and he watched the smoke rise toward the ceiling. Not a word was spoken for several minutes, then removing the cigar from his mouth, and half closing his eyes, he turned suddenly to Dick with the inquiry:

"Bevan, did I promise to give you the tax list?"

Before Dick could make reply, Comstock spoke up:—

"Promise it to him!" he exclaimed: "You didn't need to promise it to him. He supported you in the Independent, and that was the only paper in the county that really did actively support you, and you told me afterward that you owed your success to his efforts. Naturally all the other papers,

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myself included, concluded that the tax list would go to the Independent."

"Well, I didn't make any promises before election and I haven't really decided who I will have publish it. What claims have you for it, Comstock?"

"I'm not setting up any claims for myself; I want to see you do the right thing with Dick. Wolff is after it, I suppose, but for the life of me I don't see what claim he has on you."

"How do you know he is after it?"

"I saw him in town this week; and he never comes down to the county seat unless he is after something. Say, Kleine," and Comstock leaned over until his mouth was within a foot of Kleine's face, "what commission did Wolff offer you?"

"That's a little bit personal, don't you think?" was the uneasy response.

"Not at all. I know that animal, and he don't belie his name either—nor did his father before him. Now you are under no obligation to him so far as I can see, nor any of the men he associates with. As I understand the matter, the First National Bank is on your bonds down at Grafton—not the Grafton National Bank—therefore there must

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be some other reason why you would consider his paper at all in the matter, and that reason is I believe an offer to pay you a commission. Now, am I right?"

"Well, he made a proposition, said something about the custom in such matters, and so forth," and Comstock interpreted Kleine's answer as a suggestion that they make an offer of a like nature.

"Yes, I guess Wolff is right," with a knowing smile. "That has always been his custom, but not mine, Kleine. I've published that tax list a good many times, and believe me, I never paid anyone one cent of commission. It's what I call a 'hold-up', but you cannot afford to consider any such proposition, Kleine. You expect to run for some other office after your term expires here, and everyone would know that there must have been a reason for giving the list to Wolff. Again, you will want Dick's support, maybe, a few years from now."

"Yes," slowly, and then with an impish look, "if his daily is running at that time."

"It will be running all right!" exclaimed Dick, determinedly.

Comstock had surmised that Kleine had other political ambitions, but hitherto had

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been unable to make him declare himself. It might have been this suggestion of Comstock's that fired his ambition for something greater than the position he was now filling. But Kleine was not ready to surrender so soon. He took long, deep puffs at his cigar, knitting his brows — evidently in deep thought. Neither of the other two broke the silence.

Finally after the lapse of several minutes he took the cigar from his mouth, and was about to speak, when Comstock broke in:—

"Now Kleine, listen:—if you give the list to Wolff, there's going to be lots of time lost in sending the proofs back and forth between here and Grafton. If you give Dick the list it will be set up here and save all that delay —delays are dangerous; your time is short; the list is large; it must come out on time; it must be correct; this is the first time you ever got it out, and there are a good many ways in which I can help you in the proof reading. Now I will do all this for you at no extra charge. I've been through the mill, as you might say, and know the ropes."

"I guess you know the ropes. all right," laughed Kleine, and then, with a determined look on his face, "I'll tell you what I will do. If the Daily Independent is running next

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Saturday night I'll give the list to Bevan's paper with the understanding that you, Mr. Comstock, print it in the Gazette office. We will not have any copy ready until a week from tomorrow morning. How you two will cut the melon will be no concern of mine. Now, I think that is a fair proposition," and with this decision he rose from his chair.

"I'm satisfied!" exclaimed Dick, highly elated with the decision. "I publish the list."

"If the daily is running next Saturday night, remember," were Kleine's parting words, as he ushered them into the corridor.

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CHAPTER XIX.

CONCERNING THE OFFERTORY.



DICK felt as if he was walking on air as they wended their way back to the Comstock home.

"Mr. Comstock!" he exclaimed: "I don't know how to thank you for your kindness and interest in this matter. I never could have obtained Mr. Kleine's consent to giving me the tax list without your assistance."

Comstock was evidently in deep thought, and did not reply immediately.

"He certainly was not very much infatuated with the idea, and I guess it was only by my playing upon his future political ambitions that he made the agreement to give it to you if the daily was running next Saturday night. Don't forget, Dick, that there is a string to his promise."

"Oh, the daily will be running all right," was the confident reply.

"What about those fellows who subscribed for stock, Dick? Have they paid up their subscriptions? The reason I ask is that I do

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not remember having seen any report of your final act of incorporation."

"No, they haven't, Mr. Comstock. In fact, none of the stock subscribed for has been fully paid up."

How much has been paid in on stock subscriptions? Approximately, Dick. I know you can't tell me exactly."

"Well, about \$500, I should say at a guess."

"That's about what I thought. Just enough to keep you alive until they saw how this election was coming out. Then if it goes against them they will run to cover. Now, Dick, take my advice; don't let Sloan or any of those fellows think that you have a chance for the tax list until their subscriptions for stock are fully paid up, and you have completed the corporation."

"Why?"

"Make them show their colors. I haven't any confidence in any one of them except Dixon. I believe he is honestly in sympathy with your ideas for reform and all of that, but the others are simply using your paper as a means to promote their own private interests. You will see after election day.

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If your ticket loses you will see how quickly they will run to cover."

"But we are going to win, Mr. Comstock. We can't help but win."

"I hope so, Dick, but be on the safe side. If you win they may pay up their subscriptions; if you lose, they will squeal like stuck pigs. Now keep it under your hat that there is a prospect of the tax list coming to the Independent until they declare themselves."

"But if they know about the tax list they will be more willing to pay up their subscriptions, and then we can complete the corporation."

"Your argument would be all right, Dick, if they had subscribed for stock because they thought the Independent would be a good newspaper investment, but they subscribed for political purposes. As it stands now, it is a partnership arrangement—each and every one of them is as much liable for the debts of the concern as you are. Make them pay up before election day if you can. If they don't do it, and the election goes against them, they will be willing to surrender their interests for a mere song."

"And not form any stock company?" inquired Dick.

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"No. Emphatically no! I will charge you ten dollars per column for getting out this supplement; seventy-two columns, I believe it will make. That's \$720 if it runs up to \$3,000 as I expect it will. Now that leaves you over \$2,200 to go on. Why should you divide that up with those politicians?"

"That sounds like good common sense, Mr. Comstock."

"Good oat-cake logic, Dick," was the answer with a note of pride, "but here we are, and the folks are already home from church," as they entered the house.

"Why, where have you men been?" inquired Mrs. Comstock. "Dinner is all ready and on the table waiting."

"We've been out earning our dinner, ma," answered Mr. Comstock, mysteriously.

"I thought you were going to deliver a sermon to Dick," spoke up Amy, and then turning to him as he seated himself next to her at the table, "was he very severe?"

"Not to me."

"Pa, you didn't answer my question. What's all this mystery about?" and Mrs. Comstock's face wore a puzzled expression.

Before her husband could reply Dick whispered to Amy, "we get the tax list."

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"Oh, Dick, that's too good to be true! Ma, Dick gets the tax list!" and jumping up from the table she rushed around to where her mother was seated, and hugged her ecstatically.

"Forevermore, child; you nearly made me spill the gravy on your dress."

"I wouldn't care if you had, ma. Aren't you glad?" hugging her more tightly than before. "Say that you are glad."

"Yes, yes, child; of course I'm glad. Now go and sit down and behave yourself."

Meantime Bill had come over to where Dick was seated, and patting him on the back, exclaimed, "Good boy, Dick, I'm glad to hear that."

"Well, you're in it too, Bill; and beside I wouldn't have got it if it hadn't been for your father."

"Don't put it quite as strong as that, Dick. Of course I helped some; but remember I get a share of it too," and Comstock smiled, benignly. He was never the kind of man who would needlessly try to belittle one in another's estimation.

"Mr. Comstock," and his wife assumed a playfully dignified air: "will you please be so kind as to explain what you gentlemen have

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been doing this morning while we were at church trying to maintain the respectability of the family?"

"Well, to commence at the beginning, I took for my text, 'As ye sow, so should ye reap.' "

"Oh, pa, you never will quote scripture correctly," objected Amy. " 'For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.' "

"But this is a modern, revised version," laughed her father. "I like 'should' in this case better than 'shall'. As I proceeded with my sermon, my congregation raised a number of objections."

"And then it became a discourse," commented Mrs. Comstock.

"Yes; I guess discourse is good. Well, then, during the discourse it was discovered that Kleine hadn't positively told Dick when he would have the copy ready for the tax list, and it was also discovered that Dick would not be able to handle the job as well as we could in the Gazette office. So I arranged that we set the type and print the list here and send it down to him to be used as a supplement to the Independent. Then we went over to see when Kleine would have the copy ready. Now we expect to commence

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work on it a week from to-morrow." Comstock did not tell the family that Dick had not expected that the list would be given to his paper, nor did he refer in any way to the condition imposed by Kleine.

"Dad, that means that we will have to clean up the plow catalog this coming week, and," Bill added, "we will have to have another printer to do that."

"Maybe Dick can send up a printer from Grafton. Can't you, Dick?"

"Well, if I can't, we can send to the city for one."

"And it will give us all a chance to make some extra money," exclaimed Amy, exuberantly.

"Huh," and a disgusted look overspread George's face; "A feller earns it all right. I remember that stuff all right—'Lot 25 in blk. 14 in Smith's subd. of blks. 56 and 57 of of Brown's subd. of the w. hf. of the ne qr. of sec. 11 T. 23 S range 24 east of the third meridian'—It may be a pretty story, but who's the hero and what's the plot?"

"We'd better go over to the office after dinner, dad, and look the landscape over;" Bill was always very methodical.

"It looks to me as if you men were not

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satisfied with just breaking the Sabbath, but you must shatter it completely," was the comment from the end of the table.

"We will promise not to do any work, ma," was the consoling reply from her husband.

Amy drew Dick aside as they were about to leave the house.

"If you haven't written up last night's meeting yet, let me do it for you."

"Will you? I'll want about two columns."

"I'll be only too glad to do it. I took notes, but if you give me yours I'll combine the two."

"All right. Here they are; I hope you will be able to read them," and they laughed together over Dick's hieroglyphics.

At the office Comstock, Dick and Bill planned out the work for the coming week. "We can do it all right, dad, if we put a man to work and put in a couple of hours every evening. Dick, you telephone to us before noon tomorrow what the prospects are for sending a man up from Grafton, and if you can't, we will send into the city for one." And so the matter was arranged.

Bill left Comstock and Dick alone in the office, pleading another engagement. "Give

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her my regards," laughed his father, as he passed out of the door.

"William is getting to be quite a business man now," remarked his father, afterward. "You know, of course, that he has an interest in the business?"

"No; I didn't know. He never said so to me."

"Well, he can keep a close mouth. Yes, he's had an interest for some eighteen months now. He was always strong for having everything just so, and when he wanted me to buy a lot of new material and machinery, we had a good straightforward talk, and the upshot of the matter was that he put in the money he had in the bank, and allowed his wages to go into the business until it was paid for. But he's very modest and thinks a lot of Amy, and that's why he wouldn't let me put his name on any of the stationery, or at the head of the editorial column.

"But, Dick, changing the subject; how are you going to settle that franchise question down to Grafton, if your ticket wins. Of course I know how it will be settled if Renard and his ticket gets in—they'll get a renewal and consolidate with the Inter-Urban people."

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"What I would like to see," answered Dick, "would be for the city to take over the entire street railway system of Grafton and lease track privileges through the main street to the Inter-Urban people."

"I'm afraid you are too many years ahead of the times, Dick. The people of Grafton will never do it."

"No, I guess not. But being ahead of the times I don't think is a logical argument, Mr. Comstock. When Grafton put in its water works, years ago, and private individuals wanted a franchise for it, instead of the city building it, I understand the same objections were raised as are now raised against municipal ownership of the street car lines."

"But that's different, Dick. Water is a necessity, and the water works should be owned by the people."

"But street cars are a necessity now in Grafton, and other cities as large as Grafton. Then, too, the objection was raised that the city was poor; could not afford it; but the building of the water works hasn't cost the city one cent—the cost has been entirely paid out of the revenue from the consumers. Now it is the same way with the street railway. They started some twenty years ago with a

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capital of \$25,000; issued bonds for \$50,000; then increased their capital stock to \$50,000; distributed this extra stock among their stockholders as a dividend. More bonds were issued, and the capital stock again increased, until now they have a capitalization of \$200,000, all their bonds paid—all from an original investment of \$25,000. The people of Grafton have paid for it, but the other fellows own it. If the city of Grafton had started in with the railway proposition as they did with the waterworks they would now own it themselves.”

“We own our own water works here in Ripton, Dick. Shortly after I took hold of this paper the water works question came up and I threw my influence for city ownership. I made a lot of enemies at the time, but I’ve never regretted it. Just as you say in Grafton, it’s all paid for and the city owns it. But this street car question is different—it’s too much like Socialism.”

“Any more so than the city owning the water works, or the schools, or the government operating the postoffice?”

“Maybe not, maybe not, Dick. But don’t get too far ahead of the public, or they will be calling you a Socialist.”

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"They've done that already. But calling me names doesn't make me that. Because I believe in public ownership of public utilities, and another man, calling himself a Socialist, believes in the same thing, it does not necessarily follow that I am a Socialist, any more than my belief in a Supreme Being makes me a Mohammedan, because a Mohammedan believes in a Supreme Being."

"I guess that is good logic, my boy," laughed Comstock. There was nothing he enjoyed more than an argument with Dick, and oftentimes he would take a side opposite to his own beliefs for the sake of such an argument. The younger man was always so earnest in setting forth his side of the case, so positive of his facts, that Comstock always took a keen delight in getting an argument started.

"Well, don't you agree with me?" triumphantly.

"I won't say that I agree with you, nor will I say that I disagree. We'll render a verdict of 'Not Proven,' and go back to the house. It's quite cold here, now that the fire has gone out."

"Understand, Dick, that Kleine's agreement means not only your support in the

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future, but mine as well," he remarked solemnly, as they started back to the house.

"That's all right, so far as I am concerned," was the generous response. "I'll support him for whatever he wants."

"Don't make any rash promises, my boy. We'll see what kind of a record he makes. So far he has done well. A number of years ago we sent him down to the Legislature on an independent ticket, and his record there was good. It was the first time he had ever run for any office, and I'll never forget what he said when he came home one week. I asked him what he thought of the Legislature. 'Well,' he answered, 'When I started for the state capital, I thought they were all Solomons there, but when I got down there, I found they were just as big fools as myself.'"

"He don't strike me as a fool," was the laughing response.

"Far from it, Dick. When he took hold of the county treasurer's office, everybody thought he was going to make a complete change in the office force, but he was wise enough to keep on a lot of the old hands, and has made a lot of friends by doing so. He kept the Benson girl, who had been there for

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years, and knows more about the tax books than any one else in the county. Paraphrasing the poet, we might say, 'Some are born wise, some acquire wisdom and some have wisdom thrust upon them.' Kleine is willing, not only to acquire wisdom, but to have wisdom thrust upon him."

Neither of the men told the other members of the family of the condition imposed by Kleine; the reason of one being that he considered it an absurd proposition, while the elder man believed that "the least said, soonest mended."

"Back just in time," exclaimed Amy. "I can't make out this note."

"I thought you would have trouble reading them," laughed Dick, and they finished the article between them.

"Remember the condition, Dick," was Comstock's parting injunction, when he left for Grafton later in the evening.

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CHAPTER XX

EDITH'S RETURN TO RIPTON



IN the Friday following Edith's party Alice Conrad wrote what she called her "Bread-and-Butter" letter. The letter was in Alice's most exuberent style, and urged Edith to pay her another visit.

Edith had not yet recovered from the disappointment of her party of the Thursday evening, nor had she as yet received a satisfactory answer from her father in regard to her grandmother's will. Wolff had telephoned to her at the house Friday afternoon, but still resenting his remarks about Washburne, she had answered him very coolly.

And so when this letter from Alice was delivered to her Saturday afternoon, filled as it was with merry references to the time she had last spent in Ripton, she was filled with a desire to return. Acting on the impulse of the moment, she immediately called up Alice on the long distance.

"Oh, pick up and come out now,"

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was the urgent invitation from the other end of the line.

"What! This afternoon?"

"Yes; why not?"

"Why, I can't get ready in time."

"Come out tomorrow morning, then. Say, girlie, I'll meet you at the depot tomorrow morning."

At the breakfast table, Sunday morning, Renard announced to Edith that he would not go to church that morning, as he had some important matters to attend to at the office.

"Well, maybe I won't go myself," was the answer. "I don't feel much like going. I did promise Alice that I would go up to Ripton for a few days."

"You're not going today?"

"I think I will," quietly.

"Why, miss, your luggage isn't packed," exclaimed Mrs. Eaton.

"I guess I can pack it myself, what few things I may need."

"Why, little girl; isn't this rather sudden?"

"Oh, no," easily; "I was talking to Alice yesterday, and I told her I would come up today."

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"Edith, what relation is young Washburne to this girl?"

"They are cousins, pa."

"Oh, they are, eh?" and Renard evidently was not much pleased at the information.

"Well, have a good time."

"I know I will. I had a splendid time when I was up there before."

"I think Fred Wolff will be disappointed when he calls to see you this afternoon."

"Oh, you can entertain him."

"And give him your regards?"

"Yes, if you please."

Edith arrived in Ripton in time for dinner. It was while clearing off the table, and the girls had gone up to Alice's room that Grandma Washburne sputtered out:—

"Martha, I don't, for the life of me, see what that Renard girl is up here again for, unless she has designs on Joseph."

"The idea, mother! I'm sure Joe can take care of himself. From what Amy said about that party they had down there, I think the child is lonesome. That house-keeper never could take a mother's place."

"No, of course not," assented the old lady. "I tell you, Martha, it isn't good for females to be idle and stall fed."

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"It isn't the child's fault, mother; it's the way she has been brought up."

"Yes, Martha; there's something in that. It's too bad she's nothing to do to keep her out of mischief. She might have chosen some other day than the Sabbath for traveling, don't you think?"

"Why, mother nearly everyone travels on a Sunday nowadays, if they find it necessary."

"Yes, and they can always say that they find it necessary," testily, as she poked up the fire in the kitchen range. "I told you Martha, we would have a late spring. Here it is April, and still some snow left. You remember that the wind was in the north when the sun crossed the line."

"Don't worry, mother, spring 'll come soon enough."

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CHAPTER XXI

THE MAYOR'S "IMPORTANT BUSINESS"



ZAAK WALTON says:— "Come, tell me what the holy Herbert says of such days and showers as these, and then we will thank God that we enjoy them."

Herbert did say of Sunday:

"O Day most calm, most bright!

The fruit of this the next world's bud."

Sundays he would have us understand are the rich garden-beds, and the week-days the barren paths between them. Perhaps the poet is right. Renard evidently considered this Sunday a most opportune time to review the situation that confronted him; the past two days had certainly proven that his Thursday night affair would be barren of results so far as votes were concerned. The night before he had agreed to meet Sayers and Ross at his office and compare notes, and this was the "important business" that excused him from attending church.

"I told you, George, that that fool party of yours would be a boomerang!" was Ross' com-

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ment, as they discussed and cussed the meeting of the evening before.

"Yes," interjected Sayers. "If we don't stop this stampede of the women vote to the Reform ticket, we are done for."

"I don't see any stampede," was the objection. "You fellows are getting cold feet. One would think the polls were closed and the ballots all counted. Why," taking his watch from his pocket, and looking at them impressively, "it's over fifty hours before the polls close. Now we've got to win this election, and this is no time for you fellows to be talking like this. We'll not give up until after the vote is counted."

Renard had a way of inspiring confidence in his followers that he did not feel himself, and he pondered long and deeply over the reports Ross and Sayers had made to him.

After dinner he shut himself in his library, to think over the situation.

"One more term," he muttered to himself. "One more term so he could get the franchise extension; then he could consolidate with the Inter-Urban, dispose of Edith's stock in the Grafton Street Railway Company and make an accounting to her. What was all this

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opposition anyway? Hadn't he made Grafton what it was? Didn't he help organize the Commercial Club, and hadn't they induced the new factories to locate here?

How unappreciative the public was, indeed. When he took hold of the street railway Company they only gave one-half as long a ride for five cents as they did now. Look at the streets he had paved—why, it is less than ten years ago that a farmer would get stuck in the mud in the center of the town. And the new residence buildings that the Improvement Association had built right near the new factories; and the new school buildings near those new homes.

"Reform," he muttered; "reform what? Don't the saloons close promptly at eleven o'clock; don't they lock the front door, and pull down the blinds on Sunday? Why, we haven't had a policeman or fireman charged with drunkenness for over a year. And now we have a bunch of demagogues and Socialistic carpet-baggers come along and holler 'Reform.' It makes me tired."

In the midst of his soliloquy, the door bell rang, and Mrs. Eaton announced that Mr. Wolff was in the parlor.

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"Tell him to come right in," and Wolff was ushered into the library.

"Well, Fred," was the mayor's greeting, with a half smile on his face. "I suppose they've been telling you a lot of bad news?"

"Yes, Mrs. Eaton said that Miss Edith was not at home," and there was a disappointed look on his countenance.

"Oh, yes, that's so. She went up to Rip-ton for a few days. But what I had reference to was the election."

"How long is she going to be away?"

"Oh, just a few days; just a few days," brushing the matter aside. "I'm glad you called, Fred. There's a number of matters I want to talk over with you. They tell me that that woman who lectured here Saturday night has got the women vote stampeded for the Reform ticket. What do you know about it?"

"She seems to have created quite an impression, from what I've heard around the hotel this morning," was the answer.

"You've got every precinct organized, haven't you?"

"Yes, and now the boys are clamoring to know when they are going to be paid."

"I'll attend to that right now. I believe

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I have a check book here and I'll give you my personal check and you can get it cashed in the morning," and so saying he took a bunch of keys from his pocket and unlocked a drawer in his desk, where snugly stowed away in the corner was the Vial of Vishnu.

For several seconds Renard gazed at the strange Vial, and then taking it from the drawer, he handed it to Wolff.

"Funny looking object, isn't it?" he remarked.

"Why, what is it? Where did you get it?"

"Oh, it was left with me to take care of," and he proceeded to write out the check.

"What's in it? What's it for?" starting to take out the stopper.

"Well, it isn't a smelling bottle," laughed Renard, as Wolff was applying it to his nose, "it could be used in a good many ways," and so saying he took the Vial from Wolff's hand.

"Is it Egyptian, Chinese or Hindoo?"

Renard did not answer immediately, but turned the Vial over and over in his hand; then picking up a specimen ballot that lay on the library table he marked a couple of the squares opposite the candidates' name,

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using a toothpick for the purpose. After allowing the liquid to dry, he handed the ballot to Wolff.

"Looks innocent?" he inquired.

"I don't see anything."

"Wait a minute," and he laid the sheet of paper on the radiator.

"What the devil!" exclaimed Wolff, as an X appeared on the sheet of paper. "But that's colored paper."

"I know; have you got a sample of the white that the official ballots are printed on?"

"Why, it is the same kind as this," picking up a newspaper.

Renard tore off a piece from the margin and put it through the same process.

"And you mean—"

"You're printing the ballots, Fred. No one need know but you and I. Not all of them, understand—say twenty or so in a precinct. Get me?"

"But, Mr. Renard, that's a penitentiary offense."

"If you are caught, Fred. But who's going to know? I'll meet you at the office about eight o'clock." Renard had a forceful way of overcoming objections. "Some diseases require desperate remedies."

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CHAPTER XXLI

JIM AND THE VIAL OF VISHNU



WHEN the ballots were all printed in the News office, on the Saturday evening before election, it was very close to midnight.

"Me for a good sirloin steak smothered with onions," announced Jim, as he and Stevens descended the short stairway to the street.

"There's a good lunch room right down there near the depot," and Stevens pointed out the place as they walked toward the corner of the building.

"Oh, I know the place all right. I've been eating there since I struck the town."

"I'm sorry I won't have work for you Monday."

"That's all right. I happened along just right—got four days' time in two. But Friday always was my lucky day. Monday morning I'm going right over to that other dump and try and catch on. I like this burg, all right, all right."

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"Well, good-by, and be good," was Stevens' parting injunction.

"Oh, a fellow can't help but be good in this town," laughed Jim, as he sauntered down the street toward the restaurant.

"Methinks I've got a suit case somewhere in this man's town," mused Jim, the next morning, "I wonder if that express office is open. A bath, a shave, a hair cut and some clean clothes, and I might look more respectable. Expensive luxuries, but 'when in Rome one must do as the Romans do,' I guess."

He examined the express receipt, having forgotten what company it was that had forwarded the suit case. He discovered that three express companies had offices in Grafton, and entering the office of one of them he inquired the location of the one of which he was in search.

"That's the animal over there," he announced to the clerk, pointing out a substantial, but much battered suit case in the corner.

"Looks as if it had traveled some," grinned the clerk, as he noted the number of labels that adorned the sides and ends; "nearly every spot covered."

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"Yes," was the laughing reply. "From one coast to the other." But the clerk noted that they were all express company labels, and not one hotel label.

"I think," remarked Jim, as he was paying the charges, "that the friendly feeling I have for the express companies is not reciprocated," and pushing the soft felt hat back on his forehead, he surveyed the battered appearance of the suit case with a half comical expression.

"Good thing it's a strong one," laughed the clerk. "Are you in the theatrical profession?"

"Yes," and then, mysteriously, "The only legitimate show in America!" I play the tragic part of galley slave in the 'Fourth Estate.'"

"I never heard of that play."

"Thou art too young to have heard all things. Listen! Over 20,000 companies in the United States alone are clamoring for my services. I must begone!"

After Jim had passed out of the door with his much be-labeled suit case in his hand the clerk raised his hands high above his head, shook his head sadly, and muttered:—

"Bugs!"

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"He can prove that up and see what it looks like," Jim chuckled to himself as he made his way to a barber shop.

After leaving the barber shop, with his suit case in his hand, Jim made his way to the restaurant, and indulged in a hearty breakfast.

"I'll leave my suit case here until tomorrow," he decided; "then if I catch on at the other joint, I'll get me a room. Meantime I'll see what kind of a burg this is."

It was a cold, chilly day,—not the day one would choose for sight-seeing. Taking an electric car he rode to the end of the line; and after walking down one street and up another, he boarded another car back to the center of the town. Taking another car he rode out to where the new factories had been built; again rode back to the center of the town. After he had repeated the performance in each of the four directions from the center of the town, he concluded that he had seen all that was to be seen in Grafton.

"Nice little place, all right," he mused to himself. "Just like hundreds of other towns I've seen, though—houses, stores, factories—all the same." Of course they were all the same to Jim. The closest acquaintance he

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usually made with towns like Grafton had been like examining the shell of a nut and imagining the taste of the kernel. For the past seven years or more he had drifted from town to town, leaving for another place when the work was slack, or when it suited his pleasure. In the larger cities in the winter months he would stay much longer—often-times as long as four months. Work was always more plentiful at that time.

Permanent positions had been offered to him many times, but a restlessness, and a desire to "be on the move," as he expressed it, would overcome a previous determination to settle down.

He had purchased a copy of one of the large metropolitan Sunday papers that morning, and while riding on the street car, had glanced over the headlines, read certain portions that had interested him, leaving sections of it in almost every car he had patronized. Two sections he still possessed when he perched himself upon one of the high stools before the lunch counter in the restaurant. With his dinner he had absorbed everything of interest in one of the sections, and after paying the cashier he passed out of the door with the last section

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under his arm. He had fully determined to be respectable, but here was the whole afternoon and evening before him. "Was there a public library in Grafton?" he had inquired of the waiter at the restaurant. Yes, but it was closed on Sunday. Well, he'd go down to the depot and finish reading his paper there. And to the depot he went. "Closed until 6:00 P. M." read the sign on the waiting room door.

"Now, that's hard luck. Here I was going to have a nice, quiet place to read, and the door locked. This is a nice burg, all right, all right. Seemed to be nice sociable fellows in the barber shop, and that waiter at the hashery was agreeable enough. I could go back to the office, but it's kind of lonesome there." Jim would not acknowledge to his most intimate companion that he was of a sensitive nature, but a deserted printing office was more depressing to him than a graveyard. The unfinished copy on the cases—the uncompleted jobs on the presses, the unbound books in the bindery—all like a city deserted with every household in order, and the door to every house wide open.

As he thus communed with himself, his eyes wandered up and down the street.

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Almost opposite a familiar sign arrested his attention. It was a pretentious looking place, and seemed to be a prosperous establishment, but the curtains were drawn, and it too, evidently, was closed for the day.

As he looked, two men came out of the passageway to one side of the building, one of them wiping his mouth suspiciously.

Jim watched the passageway as a cat would the hole where the mouse had last sought refuge. "That looks to me like an oasis," he mused. Soon a man with a rather florid countenance came down the street, disappeared in the passageway, re-appeared, and then continued on his way.

"It is an oasis," Jim declared to himself. "Hard luck, but what else can I do?" and he made his way toward the street entrance to the passageway.

There was a space of about four feet between the first mentioned building and the building next to it. A wooden sidewalk led to the rear of the building. About thirty feet back from the street were two doors very close together. One was marked "Bar," and the second one—the furthest from the street—was marked "Family Entrance." Jim entered the door marked "Bar."

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He found himself in a large room, facing a mirror extending the full length of the opposite wall. Beneath the mirror was a glistening array of cut glass, bottles, and decanters, to the contents of which he was no stranger. Near the door through which he had entered, was a large stove of the volcano type, and the fire exposed by the open door seemed to extend a cheerful welcome to the visitor.

On the opposite side of the room were a number of tables with comfortable chairs around them, and seated at one of these tables were four young men, playing cards.

As Jim entered, the rotund gentleman behind the bar was in conversation with another man. Jim ordered a glass of ginger ale, and when it had been placed on the bar before him, and he had received his change, he picked up his glass and took a seat at one of the unoccupied tables, and started to read his paper.

The bartender resumed his conversation with the man before the bar in a low tone, and the men at the other table continued their game. Evidently it was not a very exciting game; with an occasional remark such as "bid two;" "three;" "make it a club";

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"that gives me game," etc., no other sounds were to be heard.

After awhile the man before the bar buttoned up his coat and started for the side door.

"I'll see you tomorrow," he called back to the bartender. "Goodby, boys!" as he passed the table where the card players were seated.

"Goodby, Frank," they chorused.

The bartender wiped up the bar, and then strolled around to the card table.

"Tells me that they are going to open up the barrel tomorrow," he announced as he glanced over the shoulders of the players. "What did you pass for? That hand is worth three anytime, and he's high man and goes out!"

"Oh, well, this is a long game, and I've got to get home to dinner. What's this bunk about that bunch opening a barrel?"

"That's what he said. Says he got it straight, too."

"Well, after last night's meeting, I guess they concluded that they'd have to loosen up," and the player who had just spoken rose from his seat.

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"Here," he said to the bartender; "take my place; I'm going home."

A new game was started, and a number of hands were played before there was any interruption. It became more exciting. A critical point in the game had arisen. Jim had laid down his paper and become interested. Seated just back of the bartender he could see his hand. Three had been bid; the bartender pondered over his hand, turned to Jim and laughed gleefully.

"What do you think?" he asked.

"Go to it," was the response.

"Four," and with the announcement, he played the ace of clubs. Just then the door opened, a customer entered, and the bartender rose to wait on him, pressing the balance of the cards into Jim's hand. "Play my hand for me"—and thus Jim got in the game.

After the customer had passed out of the door, Jim offered to surrender his place, but was urged to continue in the game.

"What are we playing for?" he inquired.

"Oh, just the drinks. Low man pays for the round."

Jim had filled and lighted his brier pipe and played along contentedly. He lost a

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number of games, but not more than a fair proportion. At the end of each game the score was settled. The other three players ordered cigars, but Jim after ordering ginger ale a couple of times, commenced to order beer, and then whiskey. The game had continued several hours, when one of the players, after looking at the clock announced that he had to leave. After a final round of drinks at the bar, the company separated. One of the players accompanied Jim on his unsteady way to the corner of the street near the News building.

The cold evening air had sobered him to some extent, so that he had no difficulty in making his way into the composing room, being careful to again hang the key on the nail, as he had done the previous evening. Making a pillow of his overcoat, he rolled under a table in a far corner of the room and was soon sleeping off the stupefying effects of the liquor.

He had been asleep some time when he was awakened by the sound of voices. Looking over toward the other end of the room he saw a light, and distinguished two figures.

"Twenty in a precinct is enough," he heard one say.

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"I'm going to make it forty in this! Strong opposition there."

"We can't stay here too long," and there was a nervous tone in the voice.

By twisting his head around Jim was able to see the faces of the two men, and one he recognized as Wolff.

"Gee!" he muttered to himself; "his royal nobs! Me to lay low." Some newspaper proprietors objected to the use of their premises as a lodging house. He forced himself as far back into the corner as possible, and hoped they would soon depart. He would watch them, and see what they were doing. But ere he knew it he was fast asleep again, and the next time he awoke it was daylight.

He arose from his improvised couch, stretched himself, rubbed his eyes, and commenced to ponder over what he had seen the previous evening. The only sounds to be heard were the wheels of the wagons in the street and the footsteps of some early pedestrians.

The ballots that had been printed were neatly piled on a table just back of the job presses, ready for the bindery girls to slip into the envelopes, each envelope to contain one hundred ballots.

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"The stock was all counted before I cut it," the foreman of the pressroom had explained to Jim. "There's a hundred sheets on top of each strawboard, and if you spoil any on the press, make up your spoilage out of this extra pile. Then the girls won't have to count them all over again." The ballots for each ward were piled separately.

Jim walked around to the table where the ballots were piled and looked at them critically. He shook his head and pondered; walked over to the sink, washed his hands and face, drying himself on some proof paper. While putting on his collar and tie he commenced to talk to the reflection in the glass. "I suppose you are proud of yourself, Jim Goodman. Seeing things at night, eh? Well, the next thing you know you will be seeing pink rabbits, or purple monkeys, or pea-green elephants. You'd better leave that stuff alone. All that you are sure of is that seal-brown taste in your mouth," and with these words he took another drink of water.

Still unsatisfied he walked over to the table again, minutely scrutinized the ballots, picked up a bunch and counted it. The count was correct—exactly one hundred.

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He laid them back on the table, shaking his head solemnly. Just then his eye caught sight of a peculiar looking object between the piles of ballots. He reached over and seized it.

"What's this?" he exclaimed; "never saw anything like this around a pressroom before," and he removed the stopper to smell of the contents. There was no odor. He put the stopper to his tongue, and then spit on the floor.

"Some dope that pressman has for the presses, I guess. I'll annex this curiosity for luck," and so saying he slipped it into his pocket. And thus the Vial of Vishnu acquired another possessor.

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CHAPTER XXIII

HOW THE VIAL PASSED OUT OF JIM'S POSSESSION



ONE of the employees had arrived when Jim had finished his simple toilet, and let himself out of the door on to the side street. He had heard someone in the basement, whistling, when he awoke, and concluded it was the janitor who had come over early to attend to his fire. He had evidently used the side door from the street, and had not come up stairs. The side street was deserted each time he had entered and left the office, and it is doubtful if anyone, except Stevens, knew or ever would know that he had been a guest of the News office over Sunday.

At the lunch counter he ordered what he would call a hearty breakfast—he just happened to think he had eaten no supper the previous evening—no wonder he was hungry.

"Boston coffee?" inquired the waiter, as he set the steaming dishes before him.

"Not on your tintype. Good and black and lots of it," was the emphatic retort.

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"It's pretty strong. I always make it extra strong on Monday mornings," grinned the waiter. "You ain't the only one."

"My last," laconically.

"So they all say."

"I'll be after that suit case today sometime."

"Right over in that corner there if I don't happen to be here when you call," and he left him to wait on another customer.

The factory whistles were just blowing as Jim made his way to the Independent office and a clock in a jeweler's window informed him that it was seven o'clock.

" 'And the early bird catches the worm', " Jim mused to himself. "Oh, I feel like a bird all right, all right. But I ain't saying what kind of a bird. Some barnyard fowl, I guess."

The Independent office was located in a building on one of the side streets. Many years before, the owner of the land had anticipated that the business center was destined to move in that direction, but instead it had gone in an opposite direction. It was built of brick, but only one story in height, thirty feet on the street frontage, and sixty feet deep. Windows which opened upon

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an alley way to one side, in addition to the windows in the front and rear made it a most desirable location for an establishment devoted to the "art preservative of all arts." Moreover, the rent was low.

As Jim surveyed the front of the building he noted that the composing room was located on the alley side of the building, while the office was located on the other side with a low partition running through the center. His acquaintance with offices so arranged, decided him to make his entrance directly through the front door.

There was no one in the "front office" to intercept his progress, and in the composing room he found one lone compositor distributing type.

"What's the chance for work here?" he inquired.

"Bum," was the answer. "When did you strike town?"

"Couple of days ago. Went to work on the News; worked on the ballots. How many cases are you running?"

"Just four."

"Don't think there is any chance, then?"

"No; nothing doing. Which way did you come?"

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"Came from town. Thought there might be a chance here this morning. Finished up on the ballots in the job room over at the News Saturday night."

"Believe me, there's no chance here," and as he thus unburdened himself of this positive declaration the door to the street opened.

Jim was in a position to more conveniently note the entrance of anyone from the street, and when the door opened he immediately turned around to see who was the cause of this interruption of his conversation, while the compositor to whom he was talking continued to distribute the type he had in his hand before descending from his stool. Therefore, the door had hardly closed before he heard:—

"By the holy gods, if here isn't Gentleman Dick!"

"Hello, Jim; when did you blow into town?" and he came toward him with an extended hand.

"Why, I came here Friday morning; worked on the ballots over at the News office, and thought I'd stay over to see what was doing here. You working here?"

"Well, yes, I guess so," was the laughing

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response, as he opened a gateway into the business part of the establishment.

"Position or job?" was the inquiry; he was puzzled for the instant.

Dick laughed most heartily; and then:—"I'm the ghost of the establishment," he announced with a burst of laughter.

"Some job—Dick; some position;" and then, more seriously;—"I knew you would be running a paper of your own some day. Shake! Congratulations!" and he extended his hand.

"Thanks, Jim, but you are just the fellow I've been looking for."

"Is that so?" was the answer, remembering the discouraging report of a few minutes before.

"Yes," and Dick was still holding his hand firmly; "If you are a friend of mine you could not have happened along at a better time, Jim. Say, you aren't going to fall down on me now; I know you're not?"

"Say, what's the matter with you, Dick? You getting nutty?"

"No, no, Jim; come in here," and he led him back to his sleeping room.

He motioned Jim to the only chair in the room, while he seated himself on the edge of

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the couch. "I want you to go up to Ripton—got a job for you there."

"Ripton! Where's Ripton?"

"That's the county seat; about an hour's ride from here. Listen," and Dick explained to Jim that the Independent was to publish the tax list, but it was to be printed in the Gazette office; that they needed extra help, and he was to go up there immediately.

"You can catch the 9:15, and be at work before noon," explained Dick, energetically.

"And ride on the cushions, eh?"

"Yes; I want you to get up there as soon as you can. Got money to pay your fare?"

"Sure Mike!" and he pulled a number of crumpled bills and some loose change out of his pocket. "A waste of good money, though, to pay it over to the railroad company. I've a suit case over at the restaurant. Me for it, and I'll be right back."

During Jim's absence Dick called up the Gazette office and told Bill that a printer would be up on the next train.

"And board with the proprietor, eh?" he inquired on his return. "I've heard that song before," and Dick could see that he was not pleased with that arrangement.

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"Well, you couldn't ask for a better place, believe me."

"Oh, I guess the eats will be all right, all right; but I'd like to get this suit cleaned up and pressed before I go up there," and he surveyed himself ruefully. "It's a good suit, but I forgot to exchange it for my pajamas a number of times."

Dick laughed at the idea of Jim and pajamas, but there was no time to be wasted.

"Here," he said, taking a suit of clothes from the wardrobe in a corner of the room; "Put on this suit and leave yours here. I'll send it to the cleaners, and when it comes back ship it up to you."

"Great head, Dick!" and he immediately proceeded to make the change. "A little bit large around the waist, Dick, but otherwise one would think they had been made for me."

"A few week's of Mrs. Comstock's cooking, and you will fill them out all right. Now, we have just time to catch the train. Come on, I'll go over to the depot with you."

"Give me a paper, and I'll wrap this suit up."

"Give you nothing," was the emphatic

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answer. "Come, get a move on you; there's no time to spare."

"I've some laundry here; will you take care of that for me and send it all up together?"

"Yes, yes! Leave it on the couch there with your suit, and come along."

"Methinks the gentleman is in a hurry," laughed Jim.

"Here I was just beginning to get acquainted in this town. and you hustle me off up into the country."

"Oh, quit your whining," laughed Dick. "Here's a job for you where you can make a nice little stake; and maybe it will be steady—who can tell."

"Yes, and board with the proprietor."

They had need to hurry. Jim had barely time to buy a ticket, and climb the steps of the smoking car when the conductor gave his signal to the engineer. Dick gave a sigh of relief as he started back to the office.

He made a bundle of the dirty clothes Jim had left, and placed it with his own for the laundry man.

Picking up the suit that had been discarded, he felt something hard in the outside pocket of the coat.

"Better see if there is anything in the

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pockets, before I do that up," he decided. A number of time tables, a package of tobacco, and then—

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"I wonder why in the name of Sam Hill he is carrying a thing like that around with him. Some lucky charm, I suppose. Well, I'd better take good care of it. He'll be holering for it," and so saying he carried it into the front office and put it near the ink stand on his desk.

Thus the Vial changed hands twice within twenty-four hours.

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE DAY BEFORE THE BATTLE.



IT would be difficult to find a happier man than Dick Bevan this Monday morning after he had disposed of Jim so unceremoniously. Everything was coming out right—he had found a printer for Bill, so that there would not be any delay in getting out the tax list. The tax list! Over \$2,000 clean “pick up.” Certainly he was a “lucky dog.” He had stretched his credit with the paper house in the city, and as yet he had paid nothing on his February account. There still was an unpaid balance on the new press which he had installed the previous fall, and added to this was the account of the press association which furnished the stereotype plates for the paper.

These different creditors had written to him several times, calling attention to the overdue balances, and in answering their letters he had explained that he was forming a corporation, and that as soon as the prospective stockholders had paid up

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their subscriptions, all accounts would be adjusted satisfactorially. But the credit men of these establishments had grown old and gray in playing the game known as "Business." Moreover, they had seen many a daily set sail on the troubled sea of journalism just before an election, only to be wrecked by the waves of an adverse public opinion.

They believed in being cautious, and consequently Dick was in receipt of a letter from each one of the above-mentioned creditors. The press manufacturer wrote that the note which fell due on the 15th of March must be taken care of by Thursday of this week, otherwise they would proceed to foreclose on the mortgage. The paper house wrote that if they did not receive a remittance for the February account by return mail, they would immediately draw on him for the amount, which was something over \$100. The press association wrote that Thursday of the coming week they would ship the plates to him C. O. D. \$50, unless they received a remittance before then, and that hereafter they would be compelled to insist upon a weekly settlement of his account.

He took a paper and pencil and figured over his financial resources. He had barely

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enough to meet the pay roll due that day, but the carriers would undoubtedly bring in some money that evening when they came to get their papers. They were supposed to collect weekly from their subscribers, and Monday was their day of settlement with the office. But at best he could not count on over \$45 or \$50, and that would be in pennies, nickles and dimes; seldom a quarter or half a dollar, but his rent for the month of March was still unpaid, and his bill for electric power and light must be settled before Wednesday.

"Oh, well," he concluded; "two hundred and fifty dollars, or two hundred dollars, for that matter, is all I need. I guess I can raise that all right. I'll get after Sloan and the others. Surely they will have to do something."

Monday morning Dick had more leisure than at any other time. It would be doubtful if you would find a daily newspaper that was managed more economically than the Grafton Independent. All the type was set by hand, and four compositors, working piece work, set the type, not only for the daily, but for the semi-weekly as well. In addition to the foreman for the daily was a job compositor, who also assisted the pressman.

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Counting the "devil" who could feed either the cylinder press or the job presses, the mechanical department numbered eight employees.

The only assistance Dick had in the office was a young man born and raised in Grafton, who had had some experience as a reporter on one of the large city dailies, and then had started to take a course of journalism at the state university. Converse was his name, and when he heard that the Independent was to be published as a daily he had cut short his college course and immediately tendered his services to Dick at a nominal salary.

Some days it would be the foreman of the daily who would act as city circulator; other days it would be the job compositor, or maybe the foreman of the press room; but all the carriers made their reports of collections to Dick.

It will be seen from the foregoing, that Dick was filling the position of managing editor, city editor, editorial writer, cashier, and bookkeeper, as well as advertising solicitor.

Since the daily was started the country correspondence had been edited by the compositors as they set the type at the case, with

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one reading of the proof by the foreman of the composing room.

While Dick was talking with Jim in the little room, in the far corner of the larger room, the other employees of the paper had arrived and prepared themselves for the duties of the day. In accordance with Constock's instructions not to tell Sloan or any of the others that there was a prospect of his obtaining the tax list for the Independent, his conversation with Jim had been carried on in very low tones, fearing that someone would hear them, and thus the information reach the others in an indirect way.

Jim's return to the office with his suit case, his hurried change of clothing, his departure with Dick, and all the other incidents connected with the affair, of course had not passed unnoticed, and occasioned more or less comment among some of the compositors, but Dick kept his own counsel, made explanations to no one, and before the day was over it was entirely forgotten. So many things can happen in a newspaper office in the course of the day.

There was always plenty of copy for Monday morning. In addition to the report which Amy had prepared of the Saturday

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night meeting, Converse—Charley everyone called him for short—with all the enthusiasm of youth, always turned in a mass of copy Monday morning, and if it was not for Dick's blue pencil, the compositors would be completely swamped. To know what to keep out of a paper is as important as what to put in—sometimes what is left out is more interesting than what is published.

Also on Monday with the noon mail, the country correspondence would arrive, and was used by the compositors as "time copy"—that is, copy which could be set in type whenever they were short of copy for the daily. Thus it will be seen that Dick had more time to spare on Monday than any other day of the week, and therefore, after giving Converse a number of assignments, he determined to devote the balance of the morning to these pressing financial matters.

Mark Sloan was engaged with his brother in the business of buying and shipping grain, and operated a small elevator near one of the depots. The office of Sloan Brothers was located in a one story building near the elevator, and Dick decided to see him immediately.

"Well, Bevan, and how is my campaign

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manager this morning?" was the effusive greeting. "Sit down, and give me the latest reports. That Saturday night meeting has got 'em guessing all right. Say, I heard they were arranging for a big demonstration tonight. Brass band, torchlight procession and all of that. Hear anything about it?" and then he had to stop for breath.

"Converse had some report like that this morning; that's all I know about it."

"Well, I guess it's straight, all right. But they can't get the women vote away from us now, my boy; we've got it cinched."

"It looks that way to me, Mr. Sloan; but what I came over to see you about was a little financial matter," and Dick hesitated.

"Oh—eh, yes? Very pressing? Your pay roll, I suppose?"

"No; not my pay roll. I pay off Mondays, and I've enough to take care of that. But this stock company, Mr. Sloan; you know we should have completed organizing the corporation before this, and if we had, I would not need to worry."

"Yes, yes; of course we should, but you know, Bevan, this campaign came on so sudden, and we have all been so busy we

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didn't get to it. Just as soon as this election is over we'll fix everything up right."

"Yes, I know, Mr. Sloan, but that don't help me out now."

"What's pressing you so hard? You said you had money enough to pay the printers."

"There are other bills to be paid besides the wages. I've a paper bill, long past due, then a note on the press that should have been taken care of several weeks ago, and a bill for stereotype plates."

"Stereotype plates? What's that?"

Dick tried to make as clear an explanation as possible, but Sloan was unable to understand.

"Oh, well," he said, somewhat impatiently, "I suppose it is all right. I don't know anything about the newspaper business—I deal in grain." And then noting the disappointed look on Dick's face, he concluded, "Don't get down-hearted. Just as soon as this election is over, I'll call the boys together, and we'll go over the situation and straighten everything out all right."

"But, Mr. Sloan, that's doesn't help me out now. Understand I will have to meet this note at once, or they will foreclose on the press, and these drafts and C. O. D.'s

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must be taken care of." He was determined that Sloan should understand the desperate condition that faced him.

"Where is this note? At the Grafton National Bank?"

Dick nodded.

"That's easy. Go and see Jackson, and tell him to hold it until after election. That I said so, understand? Then if the paper house draws on you, get the bank to hold the draft for a few days, see? That'll give you a few days' time, and by then we will have everything all straightened up. I'd advance you a couple of hundred dollars right now, myself, but I've got everything tied up in wheat just now, and I don't want to sell until after the first of May. Wheat is going up. But go and see Jackson right away. Everything will be all right," and patting him familiarly on the back, he led him to the door.

Dick immediately made his way to the bank, told Jackson of the situation, what Sloan advised him to do, and the suggestion about the note.

"All right, if Sloan said so," he said, "I will write to them tonight and tell them you will take up the note before the week is out.

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I guess they will wait that long; you've been pretty prompt in taking care of the previous notes." But after Dick had left the bank Jackson immediately telephoned to Sloan to verify his statements. The cashier of a national bank cannot be too cautious.

As Dick emerged from the bank he met Dixon, and walked with him to his office. The latter was bubbling over with information concerning the Saturday night meeting. How pleased the women were with Mrs. Pickrell's address, also the moving picture show.

"Have you heard about the torchlight procession that the Citizen's Ticket people are going to have tonight?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I heard about it. But it won't do them any good. Too late. They can't turn the women vote with a torchlight procession," laughed Dixon. "You know, Dick, my mother keeps pretty well posted, and if she isn't misinformed the women are almost solid for the Reform Ticket."

"I hope so, Ed; of course you realize that this election means everything to me."

"I know that, Dick, and you will be one of the most influential men in Grafton after the ballots are counted, believe me."

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"I hope we win," soberly.

"Why, Dick; you're not getting discouraged, are you?" in a surprised tone.

"It's the financial problems, Ed, that somewhat dampen my spirits. I must have at least two hundred dollars by Thursday or suspend issue." Dick was longing to tell Dixon that he would get the tax list if he could keep the daily running until Saturday night. He was inclined to be confidential with Dixon, having consulted him a number of times in regard to certain policies connected with the paper; but remembering Comstock's advice, he did not mention the matter. Instead he laid bare his financial condition, and the advice that Sloan had given.

"That's what you were at the bank for, then?"

"Yes, and Jackson said he would do it, if Sloan said so."

"Well, Dick, all I can say is to keep a stiff upper lip. I would take it," meditatively, "that Sloan don't intend to put up any more money until after election, and if he is elected, to go ahead with the stock company."

"And if we are beaten?"

"We are going to win, Dick; don't you

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worry. One thing you can depend on—win or lose I'll stand by you. But you have nothing to really worry you before Thursday."

Dixon had subscribed for \$500 worth of the newspaper stock, but it was understood that \$300 of it was to be for legal services in connection with the formation of the company, and of the balance (\$200) he had contributed \$100 in four installments of \$25 each. These various sums as contributed, had been credited by Dick on a special set of books in his desk, along with the signed subscription blanks for the stock.

His morning's interview with three of the leading candidates on the ticket he was supporting, inclined Dick to the conclusion that the remarks of Comstock in regard to the subscribers for this stock might not be without foundation.

Consequently on his return to the office he immediately transferred all the books and papers referring to the stock company from the drawer of his desk to an old-fashioned safe he had in the office. There was no combination on this safe. After closing the door and turning the knob it could not be opened without the use of a peculiarly shaped piece of steel, with four prongs of

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different lengths, being pressed into position near the center of the door. This key, as one would call it, Dick always carried in his vest pocket.

Monday night the Citizen's Party had a procession of automobiles, decorated wagons, illuminated banners and two brass bands—one the local band, and the other from a larger town outside the county. Thus the campaign closed.

Tuesday morning, the day of election, was cold, with a penetrating wind from the north-east. The sky was clear, but Old Sol's rays were not sufficiently strong to warm up the polling places.

Whenever the polling place was located in a building that was not heated by steam, the judges and clerks took turns in replenishing the fuel in the stoves. The tables used by the judges and clerks with the ballot boxes thereon were, in every instance, arranged around the source of heat, and in those places that had steam heat the ballot boxes were almost invariably placed on top of the radiators. Yet in spite of all efforts to keep the polling places at a comfortable temperature, many a clerk or judge of election complained of having a cold as a result of

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their service on the board this bleak Tuesday in early April.

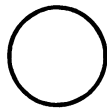
Both sides had pressed into service every automobile in town for the purpose of carrying the women to the polls.

The polls closed at five o'clock, and as it was not a very long ticket, it was anticipated that it would not take very long to count the ballots. The Commercial Club had placed a screen on the building opposite to their club rooms, for the purpose of announcing the result by means of lantern slides.

The first returns were bulletined shortly after seven o'clock. It was one of the precincts in the Third Ward, and showed Sloan in the lead. Then a report from the First Ward showing that Renard had carried his own precinct by a good majority. It was some time before any more reports were shown, and the announcement was thrown upon the screen that the judges were having trouble in counting the ballots because there were so many "split" tickets.

Tuesday was one of the busy days in the Independent office. As soon as the daily had been printed the forms were made up for the semi-weekly; the printing and mailing being done after supper.

CITY OF GRAFTON—THIRD WARD



CITIZEN'S

For Mayor



GEORGE RENARD

For City Treasurer



FRANK ROSS

For City Attorney



JOHN BUTLER

For City Clerk



WILLIAM SAYERS

For Alderman



FRANCIS WARD



REFORM

For Mayor



MARK SLOAN

For City Treasurer



DAVID JACKSON

For City Attorney



EDWARD DIXON

For City Clerk



AMOS CRAIG

For Alderman



WILLIAM DAVIS

INDEPENDENT

(By Petition)

For Alderman



HENRY ASHLEY

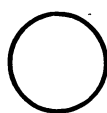
For Alderman



FREDERICK CLARK

A SAMPLE OF ONE OF THE "SPLIT" TICKETS MARKED AS EXPLAINED BY DAVIS. (See Page 259.)

CITY OF GRAFTON—THIRD WARD



CITIZEN'S

For Mayor

☐

GEORGE RENARD

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☒

FRANK ROSS

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☒

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FRANCIS WARD



REFORM

For Mayor

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☐

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☐

FREDERICK CLARK

A SAMPLE OF ONE OF THE "SPLIT" TICKETS MARKED AS EXPLAINED BY DAVIS. (See Page 259.)

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Dick had hoped that he would be able to publish the election returns in the semi-weekly, and had arranged with a number of the precinct committeemen to report the results to him by telephone or otherwise, as soon as possible. The returns were so slow in coming in that the semi-weekly was printed with the bare statement that the Reform Ticket evidently had been successful.

In the Independent office, which during the last two weeks had been the recognized headquarters of the reform forces, there were gathered this Tuesday night all the candidates on the head of the ticket; and from time to time the reform candidates for aldermen in the different wards came in with their reports.

Dick, with the assistance of Dixon had prepared sheets of paper, ruled in such a manner that the returns could be easily tabulated.

William Davis, the aldermanic candidate on the Reform Ticket in the Third Ward, was the first one to bring in a complete report from his ward, which comprised three precincts.

His report showed that Renard had received 378 votes, Sloan had received 363, and while there were four candidates for alder-

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man he, (Davis) had been elected by a plurality of 84 votes.

"That's mighty queer," remarked Sloan. "You say that I only received 363 votes while Renard got 378?"

"That's so. You see there was a lot of split tickets."

"Scratched, eh?" inquired Dick. "How were they marked?"

"In my precinct, and as I understand it, in the other two precincts in my ward, there were a number of tickets with a cross in the circle at the head of the Reform Ticket, and a cross in the square in front of Renard's name, and also in the square in front of Sayer's name. Then there were a number of tickets with a cross in the circle at the head of our ticket, and a cross in the squares in front of Ross' name, and Butler's name. The judges in the first instance counted out you and Craig, Mark. In the second instance they counted out Jackson and Dixon."

Taking a number of specimen ballots of his own ward Davis marked them as described above, and illustrated on pages 256 and 257.

"Now, when the cross is in the circle it counts for all on that ticket, except where

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there be a cross in the square in front of a candidate's name in some other column."

"And you say there were a lot of these 'split' tickets in your precinct?"

"There were about fifteen I counted in my precinct, and I don't know how many in the other two precincts in my ward. There were besides a number of tickets with a cross in the circle over the Citizen's Ticket, and a cross in front of Ashley's name, or in front of Clark's name."

"Were there any tickets with a cross in the circle at the head of the Citizen's Ticket, and crosses in the squares in front of the names of the candidates on the Reform Ticket?" asked Dick.

"No, I don't remember any marked that way."

"Were these marks in ink?"

"Yes. Just the same as the others."

"What about it, Dixon?" asked Sloan. "Is it legal to count a vote like that for Renard or any of the others?"

"Perfectly legal," answered Dixon, slowly. "But I can't understand it. I can't understand why a man would vote for Renard and Sayers, and yet vote for Jackson and me. Nor can I understand why a man would vote

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for you and Craig, and then vote for Ross and Butler."

Just then another man, who was the reform candidate for alderman in the Seventh Ward, reported that Renard had carried the ward by twenty-six votes, but that he had carried the ward for alderman by thirty-six votes.

By this time scattering returns from all sections of the city had come in, and in all cases the candidates on the Reform Ticket, with the exception of aldermen, were running behind the Citizen's Ticket.

At eight-thirty o'clock the announcement was made on the screen from the Commercial Club that the Citizen's Ticket had been elected by a majority of 250 or more, but conceded the election of four aldermen on the Reform Ticket, two on the Citizen's Ticket, and one in doubt.

Just before this final bulletin was posted Sloan, Jackson and Craig had left the Independent office in company with a number of the newly-elected aldermen, leaving Dick and Dixon alone to figure over the returns.

"There's something rotten in Denmark, Ed!" exclaimed Dick, as he studied the

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columns of figures before him. "That crowd has counted us out!"

"But, Dick, if the ballots were marked as they say they were, the judges would have to count them as they did."

"Yes, but look who the judges and clerks were. Not one of the twenty-four precincts that did not have at least one, and some two men acting as judges who were connected with the Street Railway, or the Electric Light Company. It looks crooked to me."

"Here's the last precinct," announced Dixon, as a man from the Sixth Ward came in with a report.

"Oh, we're beat, all right, except the alderman," announced the newcomer. "We elected the Reform alderman by twenty-six votes."

"Can you beat it!" exclaimed Dick. "In every ward but one we have elected the alderman and lost the rest of the ticket." And then he questioned the watcher as to how the ballots were marked. He also reported quite a number of "split" or "scratched" tickets in his precinct.

"Where's the rest of the bunch—Sloan, Jackson, Craig and the others?"

"You'll find them over at Davis' cigar

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store, I guess," answered Dixon, and the man departed.

Meantime Dick had completed the tabulating of the returns for the entire city.

"Well, there you are, Ed. Renard gets 2,899 and Sloan 2,740. A majority of 159. But the total vote received by the candidates for aldermen on our ticket is 2,927. Twenty-eight more than Renard received. Now, can you explain that?"

"It's those 'split' tickets, Dick."

"I know that; but why should any one split his or her vote the way the boys say they were split. If a man is going to vote for Renard, why should he vote for our alderman? And, again, how do you account for a man voting for Sloan, Craig, and Davis on our ticket, and voting for Ross and Butler on the other ticket?"

"Oh, well, Dick, voters will do the queerest things imaginable to a ballot, and no living soul can tell why they do it. We're beat, and that's all there is to it."

"Well, it means everything to me, Ed. You know that. I'm afraid that Sloan and the others will not feel like paying up the balance on their stock now, so we can com-

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plete the corporation," and Dick was a perfect picture of gloom.

"He said he would do something Wednesday, didn't he?"

"What he said was that they would fix everything up after the election was over."

"Well, it's over now," was the response, as a wan smile overspread his countenance. "But I wouldn't ask him about it until tomorrow morning, Dick. I'm going over to Davis'. You coming?"

"No; I have some work to finish up. I may be over later."

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CHAPTER XXV

DICK'S BLACK WEDNESDAY



HE work which Dick had told Dixon he had to finish was the preparation of an editorial for the next day's paper. The writing of this editorial he felt would require considerable thought and study. What the Independent published editorially would be construed as the views of the defeated candidates.

He kept this well in mind, and the result was an article about one-half column in length. It was clear, terse, and to the point. It analyzed the vote of each ward, and emphasized the fact that it was strange that Reform aldermen had been elected in six out of the seven wards, while the other candidates had been defeated. It congratulated the people of Grafton on being able to secure even this measure of reform.

Having completed this editorial, he proceeded to prepare the copy for the regular news report. He had decided to devote the first three columns of the first page of the

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paper to the election, with tabulated returns for each precinct. It was well toward midnight, and noises caused by men and women celebrating the election of their candidates had diminished considerably, when Dick rose from his desk, and put his copy on the foreman's table.

"I'll write a head for that in the morning," he said to himself. After replenishing the fire, he put on his hat and coat. He would walk over to the restaurant, and get a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

He walked down the street to one of the main streets, half way down the block of which was Davis' cigar store. As he was almost opposite, he could see that the proprietor was turning out the lights for the night, and a number of men were congregated on the sidewalk. He crossed the street and exchanged greetings with them, but Sloan, Jackson and Craig were not among them. Dixon, in answer to his question, told him that they had left some time before.

He was surprised to see Ward, the man who had opposed Davis in the Third Ward, among the group of men on the sidewalk.

"Well, Bevan, I suppose you have been writing your swan song, eh," he sputtered.

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VOTE BY WARDS

FIRST WARD

Renard	439	Sloan.....	441	Total.....	880
Ross	435	Jackson.....	444	Total.....	879
Butler	433	Dixon.....	439	Total.....	872
Sayers.....	445	Craig.....	433	Total.....	878

Vote received by Alderman on Reform Ticket, 457

SECOND WARD

Renard.	388	Sloan	365	Total.....	753
Ross	390	Jackson.....	363	Total.....	753
Butler	385	Dixon.....	366	Total.....	751
Sayers	390	Craig.....	364	Total.....	754

Vote received by Alderman on Reform Ticket, 391

THIRD WARD

Renard.....	378	Sloan.....	363	Total.....	741
Ross	381	Jackson.....	359	Total.....	740
Butler	379	Dixon.....	360	Total.....	739
Sayers.....	377	Craig.....	361	Total.....	738

Vote received by Alderman on Reform Ticket, 384

FOURTH WARD

Renard.....	416	Sloan.....	374	Total.....	790
Ross	413	Jackson.....	375	Total.....	788
Butler	415	Dixon.....	374	Total.....	789
Sayers	412	Craig.....	375	Total.....	787

Vote received by Alderman on Reform Ticket, 409

FIFTH WARD

Renard.....	439	Sloan	411	Total.....	850
Ross	441	Jackson.....	406	Total.....	847
Butler	443	Dixon.....	405	Total.....	848
Sayers	437	Craig.....	415	Total.....	852

Vote received by Alderman on Reform Ticket, 451

SIXTH WARD

Renard.	380	Sloan	353	Total.....	733
Ross	382	Jackson.....	352	Total.....	734
Butler	387	Dixon.....	349	Total.....	736
Sayers.....	379	Craig	354	Total.....	733

Vote received by Alderman on Reform Ticket, 383

SEVENTH WARD

Renard.....	459	Sloan.....	433	Total.....	892
Ross	456	Jackson.....	432	Total.....	888
Butler	461	Dixon.....	428	Total.....	889
Sayers.....	455	Craig.....	435	Total.....	890

Vote received by Alderman on Reform Ticket, 452

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"Oh, yes," was Dick's short answer, as he and Dixon walked to the corner together, while the others went in the opposite direction. "He's making up with Davis pretty quick, isn't he?" he asked of Dixon.

"Been sent over by the other crowd to make overtures, I think. They need Davis' vote, and believe they can get him more easily than some of the others. That's the way I size it up."

"You haven't much confidence in Davis, then?"

"They may bring pressure to bear on him."

"So that he will vote with the Renard crowd?"

"Exactly. If Sloan had been elected, Ward would have lined up with us. He's that kind. Wants to be on the winning side."

At the restaurant they had a cup of coffee together, and then separated, Dick going back to the office, where he slept, while Dixon went home. The latter advised Dick to see Sloan or Jackson as early in the morning as possible.

"I'll have to take the early train to Rip-ton in the morning. I have a case that goes

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to trial in the morning, and will see you tomorrow evening," were his parting words.

Before ten o'clock Dick presented himself in Sloan's office, and was greeted by the first disappointment of the day.

Sloan had left for the city on important business, and would not return before evening. On his return to the office he found a slip of paper shoved under the closed top of his desk. It was a notice, evidently left by the messenger from the Grafton National Bank, that a draft for \$102.64 was held by them, and must be given immediate attention.

Although Dick had expected that the paper company would draw on him, the notice was something of a shock. "And tomorrow," he mused, "that note and the C.O.D. on the plates. I'll see Jackson. Maybe he'll do something."

As soon as he could conveniently do so he went to the First National Bank to interview Jackson.

"Gone up the road. Don't expect him back before this evening," announced the assistant cashier in response to his inquiries. He went out of the door, meditating what to do. He remembered Sloan's suggestion that

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he request the bank to hold the draft for a few days. If the draft had been made through the First National Bank, it might be different, but he had no business dealings with the other bank, and furthermore, the Grafton National Bank was controlled by the men who were associated with Renard in his street railway and improvement enterprises. Dick had but a slight acquaintance with anyone in the bank, but he remembered the wording of the notice, "this demands your immediate attention." He looked across the square toward the other bank. Could he summon enough courage to go over there and ask them, antagonistic as he knew they must be to him, and request them to hold the draft for a few days?

He did not start directly across the square, but walked toward the end of the sidewalk, and then crossed to the other side, thus bringing him on the same side of the street, nearer to the bank's entrance, but further down the street. He walked toward the entrance of the bank, but instead of entering the door, he looked in at the windows, and continued on his way to the end of the street. It's hard to ask a favor of anyone connected with an institution one has antagonized.

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At the corner of the square he stopped, gazed for a moment at a passing street car, turned squarely around, retraced his steps to the bank door, and then boldly entered. Walking directly up to the window marked "Collections" he presented the slip of paper to the clerk.

"I would like to have you hold this draft for a few days," he said.

The clerk took the notice, sorted out some papers before him, finally producing the draft.

"How long did you say!" sharply. He was younger than Dick, but he had the importance of the president under the circumstances.

"Why, I would like until Saturday," was the answer.

"Saturday, eh? Three days. Well, this is a sight draft, and there are no days of grace in this state."

"Can't you hold it for a few days?"

"Well, I'll see. I don't know what the instructions are," and he picked up the papers, and passed into another room, leaving Dick at the window. Returning in a few moments he threw back his shoulders, assumed a very dignified air, and announced:

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"The cashier isn't in, and his assistant doesn't know what the instructions are, but we will hold it until three o'clock tomorrow, and if it isn't paid then, it may go to protest.

"You can't hold it until Saturday?"

"Saturday," sneeringly; "we're taking chances holding it until tomorrow. I presume it is for a past due account," and he turned to his books.

There were not many customers in the bank at the time, and as Dick passed the row of windows on his way to the door, every clerk looked at him, and whispered to the one next to him.

The News published two editions daily—one at noon for its out-of-town circulation, and another late in the afternoon. After leaving the bank he bought a copy of the early edition from a boy at the corner, and proceeded back to the office.

The employees were just leaving for lunch, and Stedman, the foreman of the composing room, was the last man to leave.

"Dick," he said, as he was putting on his coat, "I wish you would give me the head for the election report, so I can set it up as soon as I get back from lunch."

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"All right, Frank," was the answer, as he spread the News out on his desk. A glowing headline, in type three inches high announced "Renard and entire Citizen's Ticket elected," followed by tabulated returns from the various wards, incidents connected with the election, and double column pictures of the successful candidates. Dick glanced over the report, compared the figures with those which he had tabulated the night before, and found that with the exception of a few minor discrepancies, they were substantially the same. In footing up the News report of the vote received by the Reform Ticket aldermen the total was 2,929, while the total vote for mayor was the same as the report he had compiled, namely, Renard, 2,899; Sloan, 2,740.

As he pondered over these figures during the noon hour, remembered the scant courtesy he had received at the bank, the disappointment of not being able to see Sloan or Jackson, and Dixon's absence from the city as well, a feeling of anger and resentment took possession of him. Perhaps if he had eaten a lunch before returning to the office, that three column heading and opening paragraph of the election report might never have been

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written, and the disastrous consequences that followed might not have happened. The mind has wonderful control over matter, but the condition of one's stomach has such a reactionary effect on one's view of certain situations. The morning had been cloudy, and at noon there was a cold, drizzling rain. The office was deserted, and he had a chilly feeling of being forsaken by those whose battles he had fought. With the exultant words of the News report of the election dancing through his tired brain, he took paper and pencil, and wrote the heading for his own paper.

FRAUD IN COUNTING THE BALLOTS

Renard and Followers Intimidate Election Judges

**Employees of the Street Railway Company,
Sitting as Election Judges, Count Out
the Reform Ticket.**

**Discrepancies in the Vote Received by the Reform
Aldermen and Rest of Ticket Indicates Fraud.**

Following the above heading were two paragraphs in heavy-face type set full three column measure, intimating that the election judges had been compelled to count these 'split' tickets contrary to their own ideas as

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to how they should counted. The article also claimed that Renard and his followers had been backed up by a ruling made by Sayers, the city clerk, and that the instructions were given by one whose personal interests were at stake, and therefore biased.

He had finished the heading and opening paragraph by the time Stedman returned from lunch.

"Pretty strong statement, Dick," remarked Stedman, reading over the heading, while listening to Dick's instructions as to how it was to be set.

Stedman was nearly twice Dick's age, and they had worked together in the city before the latter had come to Grafton. His children had grown up, married, and there was only himself and wife. When Dick had told him that he was going to Grafton to take charge of the Independent, Stedman told him that he envied him, and that if he ever heard of a similar opening in a country town to let him know. And so it happened that when Dick started the daily, he offered Stedman the foremanship. The offer was immediately accepted, and although the wages were not so large as what he had received in the city, he expressed himself many times as more

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than satisfied with the change. Although Dick was not confidential with him as to his business affairs, the elder man always addressed him by his first name, but when speaking of him to the other men, he referred to him as "Mr. Bevan."

Since Stedman had established his home in Grafton he had taken a keen interest in the local political situation, and both in the office and outside had been most enthusiastic in the support of Dick's reform policies. Furthermore, he admired the fearless tone of the editorials. But he felt that the heading which he had just read was a little stronger than the facts warranted, hence the remark.

"It's none too strong. I wish I could make it stronger. We should demand a recount of the ballots."

"All right, Dick. Whatever you say goes. But I'll bet it shakes them up some."

"I'll give you an 'ad' in a few minutes that I want at the head of the last two columns of the first page."

"All right. I'll get busy on this. How much space do you want for the 'ad'?"

"Make it six inches, double column." And Dick immediately proceeded to write the following advertisement:

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REWARD ! ! ! ! ! ELECTION FRAUDS

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS

Will be paid for information which will lead to the conviction of anyone connected with the election frauds at the last city election in Grafton.

RICHARD BEVAN,
INDEPENDENT OFFICE

It was about eight o'clock in the evening on this memorable Wednesday when Dick had just completed some work he had been trying to do all day, when Sloan, accompanied by Jackson, entered the office.

Dick's cordial greeting was met by a violent explosion of oaths from Sloan.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Dick in surprise.

"Matter! Matter! Man? Say, you're the biggest idiot that God ever let live. A nice mess you've got us into now. I wish I'd never seen you or your d—d paper." And another string of oaths filled the air.

"You haven't sense enough to pound sand in a rat hole," put in Jackson, as Sloan

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sank into a chair exhausted by his unwonted exertions.

"I don't understand," and as Dick spoke Dixon entered the door. His face was flushed, but evidently he had better control of his feelings than the other two. He greeted the others with a nod.

"Why, you're a criminal!" exclaimed Jackson. "And you've put us in a pretty pickle."

Dick's face wore such a puzzled expression as he gazed from one to the other, that Dixon could not suppress a laugh.

"Laugh!" exploded Sloan, "Laugh! I don't see anything to laugh at here, with this poor fool liable to be arrested for publishing that article, and with us liable to be sued for damages"

"Liable to be arrested! Sued for damages! What do you mean?" asked Dick.

"I don't know as it is so serious as all that," reassured Dixon. "Of course the article is put pretty strong." And then he explained that the heading to the report of the election, and the first two paragraphs might be the basis for a criminal libel suit.

"Well, you fellows needn't worry over

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that. I wrote the article and am the one that will have to suffer the penalty."

"You! What have you got?" exclaimed Jackson. "They could lock you up, and it would be a d—— good thing for you. But they'll get after us because we have money."

"If you'd finished the stock company, as you agreed to, you'd have been better off," was Dick's retort. He was beginning to get angry. "You're a bunch of cowards; beginning to show the yellow streak just as soon as there is any trouble. You came to me, and urged me to start the daily on a promise that you would back it up financially. And what have you done? Fed me on promises, and paid in but a few hundred dollars."

"Don't get excited, Dick," admonished Dixon.

"Excited! I'm not excited. It's you fellows that are excited because you think you might have to spend a few dollars in defending a lawsuit. How about me? Every cent I have in the world is invested in this paper; but if you, Sloan and Jackson, don't intend to stand back of me, I'll go it alone."

"What in h— did you publish that article for?" demanded Sloan.

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"Yes, what grounds have you for making such a statement?" said Jackson.

"Never you mind what my grounds were," Dick answered, his anger increasing every minute. "Let me tell you, I intend to have a recount of those ballots, and as for you, Mr. Sloan and Mr. Jackson, I want you to get right out of my office. No man can come in here and call me a fool, an idiot, and a criminal."

"Come on, Mark," and Jackson pulled Sloan by the sleeve. "It's no use wasting any more time here."

As they slammed the door after them Dick and Dixon studied each other's faces for several minutes. It was Dixon who broke the silence.

"Dick, I told you Monday that I would stand by you no matter how the election went, and now," extending his hand, "I mean to the last ditch." And they shook hands heartily.

"Thanks, Ed. "I'm not worrying about this libel business as much as the financial matters. I've got to keep the daily going, and where I am going to get money from I don't know."

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"Why not suspend the daily, and just run the semi-weekly?"

"I can't stop the daily."

"I think it would be the best thing to do, Dick. Of course in time it might be a paying proposition. You know how I am fixed, financially, but you've welcome to what I have. I'll speak to mother; she has some money in the bank, and on an emergency, she could borrow some on our home. But I think the best thing to do is to suspend the daily."

"Ed, you're true blue. But I'll never accept money from widows or orphans. But I must keep the daily going until Saturday, and I'll tell you why."

After swearing him to secrecy, he told Dixon about the tax list, the conditions imposed by Kleine, and everything connected with the arrangement. Dixon was deeply interested.

"Why of course you are entitled to the tax list!" he exclaimed vehemently. "And to think that none of us thought of it. The Independent was the only paper in the county to come out flat-footed for Kleine. Comstock is all right!" he continued. "He knows all the ins and outs of the

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political situation, and knows how to go about it when he wants anything, and he generally gets what he goes after. Say, Dick!" suddenly, as he ran his fingers through his hair, "I'll bet that was why Wolff was up to Ripton today."

"Did you see him in Ripton today?"

"Yes, and come to think of it now, he was talking to Kleine in the corridor just outside of the treasurer's office. I had business in the treasurer's office myself this morning. I was paying taxes for one of my clients. I see now why you have to keep the daily going. You haven't told any one else about this?"

"No one here in Grafton. Mr. Comstock advised me to say absolutely nothing to any one. Even the boys in the office here don't know. Monday, when I was telling Jim about it, and sent him up to work on the Gazette, I was very careful that no one should hear what we were talking about."

"Jim? Who's Jim?"

"Why, the printer I sent up there Monday to help them out. I had to tell him. Mr. Comstock said, 'make them show their colors,' and I guess they have all right, and it's a bright yellow."

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"I don't know, Dick, but that it wasn't such a bad play, after all. You know where you stand, and you know what to expect from Sloan and Jackson."

"I can't expect any good from them. But Ed, about that remark of Jackson's. Is there anything in it?"

"Oh; that 'criminal libel' talk?"

"Yes." And Dick was deeply concerned.

"I'll have to look that up, Dick. But I wouldn't worry over that. I don't think they would attempt to do anything like that. What they might do is to enter suit for damages against Craig, myself and you. You remember we were the ones who applied for the license to incorporate."

"And can't they sue Sloan, Jackson, and the others?"

"Yes, but they would have to prove that they were financially interested in the paper. The only proof that they would have would be the subscription blanks for stock with their names signed to them, and your books. By the way, Dick, you have all the papers in the matter. Where are they?"

Dick pointed to the safe, and taking the key from his pocket, held it so Dixon could see it.

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"Good! Don't give them to anyone until I tell you. In the morning I'll look up the criminal libel proposition. It may be that Jackson has consulted with old Judge Bloomfield. The judge is the bank's attorney, you know. I'll see how much money mother has and maybe we can gather up enough to keep the paper going until Saturday."

"I certainly appreciate your interest, Ed, but as I told you I would not risk widow's money in any newspaper."

"We'll talk about that after I get it. That is, if I'm able to get it. I'm going home now, and I'll ask mother at breakfast time."

Dick felt considerably relieved after his talk with Dixon, but the excitement caused by his heated argument with Sloan and Jackson, combined with the worries of the day, had left him physically and mentally exhausted, and after Dixon's departure, he sank wearily into the chair before his desk, and tried to study out what to do to raise money for these pressing accounts.

"Two hundred and two dollars, and sixty-four cents. I can raise the two dollars and sixty-four cents, but the two hundred," he said to himself, as he took paper and pencil,

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and figured the amounts over and over again. He really did not need to use paper and pencil; the figures had been in his mind all day. He knew the amounts all too well, and had made the additions mentally hundreds of times since he had first received the various letters from his creditors. But as he idly wrote the amount — \$200—on a sheet of paper before him, the figure two in his fevered brain assumed the appearance of a capital Q, and the two ciphers resembled holes into which his hopes and ambitions were to be swept.

"Ten o'clock tomorrow I must have fifty dollars for the express company; at two o'clock I must have another hundred," and as he thus communed with himself, his eyes wandered over the top of his desk. Roving from object to object, they finally centered on the peculiarly shaped Vial that he had taken from the pocket of Jim's coat.

As he looked he recollected how it had come into his possession; the scene of last Monday morning; his anxiety to have Jim catch the train for Ripton. All raced through his mind like a series of tableaux.

Ripton — Amy — Comstock — Kleine — the tax list — and as he thought how easily all

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this might slip from him, he imagined the face on the stopper of the Vial was grinning at him. Didn't that eye wink at him just then, or did he imagine it?

He would put the accursed thing out of his sight. Suiting the action to the thought, he picked it up with his left hand, while he opened the top drawer of his desk with his right. The papers in the drawer were not arranged very orderly, and he had to shove them to one side in order to make room. In doing so his eye was attracted by an envelope that enclosed a formidable looking document.

"My life insurance policy," he reflected. "I guess I'd better put that in the safe." Having made room for the Vial in the drawer, he closed and locked it, laying the policy on his desk. A number of years before he had been persuaded by a friend in the city to take out an insurance policy in one of the old line companies. He didn't know why he had done so; he had no one depending upon him, nor was there a prospect that he would have. But the agent had been so persistent, making a point to see him night and morning until he had finally secured his name to the application blank. Each time he had paid the premium he had taken him-

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self to task for being so foolish as to have taken out the insurance. During the holidays he had paid another annual premium, and he had wondered at that time if it would not be a wise idea to drop it. But then another element had entered into his affairs, and he fancied that the line reading, "Payable to my estate," might possibly be changed.

He picked up the envelope, and idly pulled the policy out. Opening it, he spread it out before him on the desk. Turning the page, his eyes encountered four columns of figures.

"If I only had a fraction of the money I have paid in on this thing it would see me through," he muttered to himself. "Hello, what's this? 'Cash loan'. I wonder if I could borrow money on it," and he examined the date. "Three years last December. Well, I have always said I was a fool for taking it out, but I've been a bigger fool in not knowing that I could realize anything on it."

Running his finger down the column, he read: "One year—none; two years—none; three years—\$275."

"Two hundred and seventy-five dollars!"

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he exclaimed. "Why, that will see me through easy."

But how to negotiate the loan? That was the question. To write to the home office for information, and wait for an answer, would take time. He could call up Dixon—he would be home by this time—and he looked at his watch. Ten-fifty, his time-piece showed. Then another train of thought ran through his mind, as he heard the whistle of a locomotive. Why not go to the city, taking his policy with him, and lay the matter before the credit man at the paper house? Undoubtedly the insurance company had a branch there where he could get full information.

Dick was the kind of a man who acted immediately upon the impulse of the moment, and five minutes later he was climbing the steps of the smoking car of the train that had just come in from Ripton. Knowing that he would not have time to buy a ticket he had boarded the train on the side opposite the depot, barely missing being hit by a freight that had just pulled in on the siding to allow the express to pass.

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CHAPTER XXVI

JIM AND THE GAZETTE OFFICE



DON'T know where I'm going, but I'm on the way, all right, all right," Jim sang softly to himself, as he settled down on a seat near the window of the smoking car, after being so unceremoniously hustled aboard the train by Dick. "What's the name of that town?" he inquired as he looked at his railroad ticket. "Ripton, eh? All right, Dick, we'll see what kind of a burg Ripton is; if I like it, all right, but I'd like to have had a little visit with you before leaving. But believe me, I don't like this 'boarding with the proprietor' stunt."

After the conductor had relieved him of his ticket, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, which had been firmly fixed between his teeth since he boarded the train. He fumbled in the pockets of his coat for his package of tobacco, preparatory to filling his pipe. Pocket after pocket he searched in vain.

"Just my luck. That's what I get for

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changing clothes with Dick. Left it in the other coat all right, and that antique I swiped from the pressman along with it. I hope Dick'll take good care of it. If I lose that I might be hoodooed. Say, kid!" he called to the train boy, who was just passing his seat, "got any tobacco there?" pointing to his box in the corner of the car.

"Naw. Just cigars."

"Well, I've got to smoke something," as he made a selection from his stock. "What kind of a burg is this Ripton?"

"Next stop. Can't miss it. County seat. All them wise guys up there get off at Ripton. They're lawyers," he whispered. "When they make a break for the door you're at Ripton, see?"

"All right, son," and Jim settled down to the task of getting as much consolation out of the cigar he had purchased as he would from his old briar pipe. At about the time he had used nearly a box of matches in consuming one-half of it, and fletcherized about one-quarter off the other end, the conductor announced his station.

Picking up his suit case he made his way to the door. Alighting on the depot platform, he surveyed the surrounding country.

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Across from the depot he noted the Conrad store, and the sign, "Postoffice."

"Me for some tobacco, the first thing," and he immediately set forth in that direction. While there was quite a crowd inside the store, they evidently were waiting for the mail, and Jim experienced no delay in making his purchase.

"Say, can I leave this suit case here?" he inquired of the man who had waited on him, who was none other than Mr. Conrad.

"Sure; give it to the young lady over there," pointing to Alice, who was behind the glass partition, waiting for the clerk to bring up the mail sacks.

"I'd like to leave this suit case here if you don't mind. I'll call for it some time today," and he held it so she could have a good view.

"All right; set it over in that corner. I guess you'll be able to identify it all right." And there was a merry twinkle in her eye that was somewhat disconcerting to Jim.

"I-I-eh,—yes, I guess so," and he grinned. "Maybe you will be so kind as to tell me where the Gazette office is."

"Why, yes. Right across the bridge, and about two squares down, on this side of the

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street. Are you the new printer that's going to work there?"

"Well, I'm not a very old one. I'm new here, all right, all right."

"I guess you are," and she laughed merrily. "But you'll find the Gazette office easily enough."

"All right, thank you," and Jim scratched his ear meditatively as he passed out of the door. Stopping on the threshold he filled his pipe and lighted it, and then turned to look in the window of the store. He noticed that Alice was watching him. Taking his pipe from his mouth, he pointed down the street with the stem, making a funny little grimace the while. She nodded laughingly, and then turned her attention to the mail bags the clerk had just brought in.

"Methinks there are some bright people still inhabiting this burg," Jim remarked to himself. "Why they think it is necessary to print a paper here is what gets my goat. Everybody knows not only what has happened, but what's going to happen. New printer, eh? Had me spotted just as soon as I landed in town. Well, I guess this is the dump, all right, all right." And he stopped in front of the newspaper office.

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The Gazette office occupied a one-story building on the main street. There were vacant spaces on both sides of the structure, affording ample light, and there was no necessity of having any of the type cases so arranged that any one setting type could be observed from the thoroughfare. But Amy had insisted that one of the type racks should be so placed that she would have a full view of the main highway of the village when she was setting type. It naturally followed that she was the first one in the office to note Jim's arrival.

"Here's your printer, Will," she announced, as Jim surveyed the establishment from the sidewalk.

"Why don't he come in?" Bill inquired, turning around from his work, and walking toward the door.

"Looking for me, eh?" was Jim's greeting, as he opened the door, a comical grin overspreading his countenance.

"Yes; I thought you might have got lost," was the laughing answer. "Hang your hat and coat over there," pointing to a row of hooks in the office. "I'll find an extra apron for you, if you are ready to go to work." Jim's neat appearance, in Dick's suit, in-

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spired a doubt in Bill's mind that he was prepared for work.

"An apron would be handy, all right, all right. This is the only suit I have with me."

"Let him take the one George has been using, and when he comes back from the postoffice, send him up to the house for some. Mamma has half a dozen made up for you boys," suggested Amy.

"How are you on the stone?" inquired Bill, when Jim announced himself ready for work. The inquiry had reference to the locking up of the forms ready for the press. "This is a catalog we want to finish up this week." And he explained to Jim how it was to be printed, while he prepared the stock for it.

As Jim looked at the pages on the imposing stone, listened to Bill's explanations, and glanced around the office, he immediately made up his mind that here was a workman who was not only skillful, but who also believed that his work should bear the stamp of the artist. The catalog was not only to be a descriptive price list of the plows that the manufacturers desired to sell, but was also intended to be a work of art from the printer's standpoint.

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"Some swell job for a country printing office," he remarked, and there was a note of admiration in his voice.

"Well, we are having the cover embossed in the city. They were going to send the whole job there—didn't think we could do it. Wanted something high class. But I convinced them that we could do it. I'm rushing it through faster than I would like to, though."

Jim walked over to the cylinder press, inspected it critically, and then turning to Bill he exclaimed enthusiastically—"of course you can do it! Why, that machine will turn out the finest of work if it's handled right. All a question of ink, paper and good engraving."

"Yes, and feeding the sheets to the guides. I guess I'll have to feed this job myself. I won't be able to trust it to George there," indicating his brother, who had just returned from the postoffice.

"I'll help you out there if you want."

"You can feed, then?"

"Sure, anything at all. I wasn't stuck on coming up here, to tell the truth. I thought it was like a lot of other papers scattered through the country. Just piles

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of junk—you know what I mean. But you've got some plant here, all right, all right, and I think there will be some satisfaction in working here."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, a fellow can see what he is doing; get me?"

"Not exactly."

"Never worked in one of the big city offices, eh?"

"No."

"Well, there you get a piece of copy, and instructions to set it such and such a measure, such and such a style and type, and after you get that done, you get another piece of copy, set it another measure and another style. At the end of the day you don't know what you have been doing. Just like working in the dark. A fellow can't take an interest in such work. He's like an old horse working in a tread-mill."

"Well, you see what I am trying to do here, don't you?"

"I get you, all right, all right." And Jim went to work with more vim and energy than he had felt for many years.

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CHAPTER XXVII

EDITH AND WASHBURNE



HENEVER Joe Washburne called at the postoffice for his mail, Alice always had what she called "an earfull" of news for him. While he always listened to what he called her "idle gossip," and remarked afterwards that it "went in one ear and out of the other," he was nevertheless amused at the manner she had of telling the happenings of the day. So it happened on this Saturday, after Alice had had her telephone conversation with Edith, he was listening to her chatter, while looking over his mail.

"Well," he said as she stopped talking; "I guess I've got all the news, so I'll be on my way."

"Oh, you think you have got all the news, do you? There's one piece of news that you'd like to hear that I haven't told you. So, there, Mr. Smartie," and there

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was a provoking air of mystery in Alice's voice that was not lost on her hearer.

"Well, you've been talking long enough."

"Oh, is that so?" captiously.

"Well, what's the other piece of news? I've got to be going."

"Oh, you'd like to know, wouldn't you? And then, after I've told you, you'd say that you weren't interested."

"All right, then; you can tell me some other time," and Joe made a move toward the door.

"Don't you want to know? Come back here, and I'll tell you," and when he was close enough she whispered, "It's about Edith."

"Edith who?"

"Edith who," his cousin mimicked, "as though you knew a score of Ediths. Maybe you do, but you know which one I mean."

"Well, what about her?" awkwardly.

"I knew you'd be interested. I was talking with her a little while ago."

"Why, she's not in Ripton!"

"No?" provokingly.

"Say, if you don't quit your fooling, and tell me what you have to tell me, I'll come

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around on the other side of that partition, and if I do you'll be sorry, young lady."

"My, isn't he getting angry?" And then Washburne made a move toward the other side of the partition. "Now, Joe, don't you come in here. I'll tell you."

"All right then; hurry, or you know what you'll get."

"Well, if you ever pinch me again like you did the other day, I'll never speak to you again. My arm is black and blue yet."

"I'm losing patience with you. What is it about Edith?"

"Well, she's coming up here tomorrow, and maybe stay a few days."

"Oh, is that all?"

"Yes, that is all. But it will be enough to bring you over to supper tomorrow night, all right," was Alice's parting shot as Joe passed out of the door.

Alice was not far amiss in her prophecy. Although Joe and his mother did not come over to tea, he did arrive just as the girls were getting ready to go to church, and naturally accompanied them.

It might or might not have been pre-arranged by Alice, but it did happen that she was separated from Edith and Joe after the

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services, and while waiting for her the two had a few minutes alone.

"I hope you are going to stay quite a while in Ripton. Of course there isn't much to see here, but Alice will make it as pleasant as she can."

"Alice is a dear," enthusiastically. "She's always so full of life; I wish I had such a buoyant spirit."

"Oh, she keeps things stirred up all right. Something doing whenever she's around."

"And yet she works in the postoffice every day!" exclaimed Edith. "I don't see how she can do it."

"Work!" was the laughing response; "why she'd sooner go down to the store every day, and sort out the mail, and attend to the duties of the office than eat. That's play for her."

"But it's work, though. People call it work. Alice always says she 'has her work to do at the office'."

"Well, yes; I suppose you would call it work. But Alice likes to do it, and Uncle Martin is glad to have her."

"I wish I could do something like that, but papa and Mrs. Eaton have always op-

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posed my doing anything that looked like work. But the girls I like best seem to be the ones who are doing what people call working. Do you know—but I ought not to tell you this—” and she looked inquiringly into his face as she hesitated.

“Why won’t you tell me?” asked Washburne.

They had started to walk toward the Conrad home, having concluded that Alice must have preceded them.

“You may be offended; and—and—you may laugh.”

“And if I promise not?”

“Will you promise?”

“Yes, I promise. Cross my heart,” and Joe laughed heartily, as he made the sign on his left breast. “That’s where the heart is, isn’t it!”

But Edith was very serious. “Now you promised, remember, and you must not get angry. When I told Mrs. Eaton that Amy Comstock worked in her father’s office, and that Alice was in the postoffice, she said that—that—”

“What?” and Washburne began to be impressed by Edith’s serious manner.

“That she thought that with all the care

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that she had exercised in bringing me up since my mother died, I ought to be able to find better associates and companions than common working girls—me, the mayor's daughter. Now, I know you are angry," and she clutched Joe's arm.

"Who's Mrs. Eaton?" asked Washburne, and his voice was impressively solemn.

"Why, she's papa's housekeeper."

"I believe I've heard of her. Is it true that she's English?"

"Yes. Why?"

Washburne did not answer, and they continued their walk for some time in silence. It was Edith who spoke first.

"You promised that you would not be angry, and you are."

Washburne stopped, grasped Edith by the arm, and turned her face toward him, then raising his right hand impressively he said:

"Miss Renard, I am not angry at you, or what you have said, but my ancestors and your ancestors—at least on your mother's side—were members of the 'Boston Tea Party' and if I read history right that was the end of class distinction in this country. I hold fast to that principle, and believe that

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the only patent anyone has to nobility is the service that one renders to his fellow-man."

"I was afraid you would be displeased."

"Well," slowly, as they continued on their way. "Perhaps I spoke a little roughly a moment ago, but somehow it makes my blood boil whenever anyone talks class distinction. To me there are only three classes—working-men, beggars and thieves."

"Then I am in the beggerman class?"

"I don't understand."

"I am not working for what I get; I'm not stealing it; there is but one more class." And there was a deprecatory tone in her voice.

"But you don't need to work."

"And neither does Alice or Amy."

"But that's different."

"Different? Because I belong to what Mrs. Eaton calls 'the gentry', I suppose?"

"Gentry!—that word, to me, smacks of toadyism and snobbisness."

"Well, that's what I have had dinned into my ears ever since I can remember. That it wasn't proper for me to do this or that or the other, because I belonged to the 'gentry.' I don't like it. Now you say I don't need to work like the other girls, and

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yet you have just as much respect for them because they do work. Tell me, honestly, don't you respect them more?" There was an eagerness in her tone and manner that Washburne could not fathom.

"Well, perhaps I do."

"I thought so," triumphantly. "Now I'm going to find some work to do. I'll cease to belong to the 'gentry' class then. You don't like that word, do you?"

"No, I don't. I wish you wouldn't use it."

By this time they had reached the Conrad home, and Alice was bidding good night to some friends who had walked home with her.

"Why, we were looking for you, Alice. Where did you go to?" asked Edith.

"Oh, I thought I'd walk along with the Johnsons. Joe's big enough to take care of you," and then she whispered to Joe, "when two's company, three's a crowd, eh!" and she laughed provokingly as she darted into the house before he could stop her.

"What did she say?" asked Edith.

"Nothing; just one of her fool remarks. But you are not in earnest about what we were just talking about?"

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"I certainly am. There must be something real for me to do somewhere. You're coming in, aren't you?"

"Just to say good night to grandma and Aunt Martha. I'll see you before you go home?"

"I hope so." There was a sincerity in her tone that was very pleasing to Washburne.

The next morning Edith was still asleep when Alice arose. Careful not to arouse her guest, she tiptoed around the room while making her toilet, and was congratulating herself upon her success when Edith awoke.

"Why, Alice, you are all dressed! Why didn't you call me?"

"You don't have to get up yet, girlie. I thought I would get away before you woke up."

"What time is it?"

"It isn't seven o'clock yet;" and she stooped over to kiss her. "You go to sleep and have breakfast with grandma. Papa is running the washing machine for mamma, and I want to be at the store early."

"You'll all think me a lazy-bones," remonstrated Edith.

"No we won't, either," laughed Alice.

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"You go to sleep again, like a good little girl."

"Can't I help you?"

"Perhaps this afternoon. You can have breakfast and a visit with grandma this morning. Goodby until dinner time."

It was about two hours later when Edith came down stairs. Grandma was in the kitchen, preparing her own breakfast. Mr. Conrad had just left for the store, while his wife was in the yard hanging out the clothes.

"Good morning—er—grandma," was Edith's greeting, hesitating somewhat. She did not like to address her as Mrs. Washburne, it seemed so formal, and when they were alone she felt that to address her as "grandma" was almost too familiar.

"Good morning, miss, if it isn't too late. It must be after nine o'clock." Grandma was evidently peeved about something, but Edith by this time had grown somewhat accustomed to her querulous disposition. Before she could answer, Mrs. Conrad came in with the empty clothes baskets, her rosy cheeks testifying to the coldness of the day.

"Good morning, Edith. Have you been up long? Sit right down at the table, and I'll soon have some breakfast for you."

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"Martha, have you found a new place for that sugar jar? There isn't a mite of sugar on the table. I do wish you'd quit changing things around so that folks can't find anything."

"I'll get it for you, mother. I intended to fill the bowl just as soon as I could, but I was so set on getting my wash out first this morning that I forgot it. It's such a pretty day, and I've got my clothes out before anyone around."

"Well, they look nice and white, Martha, but you'll have to fix those props, or they'll be in the dirt with this wind a-blowing. Those sheets are trailing now;" and grandma surveyed the morning's work critically.

"I'll fix that right away," and Mrs. Conrad started out of the door. Edith, having nothing else to do, followed her into the yard.

"Can't I help you, Mrs. Conrad?"

"Oh, I'll just put another prop in there and tilt them all toward the wind. There now," when she had adjusted them to her satisfaction, "they'll be all right now. I've been up since five o'clock! I was determined that no one should get ahead of me this morning."

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"What difference does it make? If you didn't get them on the line until noon, they'd have time to dry, wouldn't they?" Edith could not understand why Mrs. Conrad was so elated over the matter.

"By noon! Heavens, if I didn't have them on the line long before noon, people would think me a shiftless housekeeper. Now, I'll have some breakfast for you in a few minutes. Mother always has a good fire, and we'll have a pan of biscuits. I feel as if I need a snack of something myself."

"Can't I do something to help you?"

Meantime Grandma Washburne had prepared her toast and eggs, and was enjoying them alone in the dining room.

"Martha, if she wants to do something, let her clear these dishes off the table. If you're going to make biscuit, she'd have time to wash 'em."

"Why, mother, Edith didn't come up here to wash dishes," laughed Mrs. Conrad.

Edith, however, having determined to win the old lady's esteem if possible, proceeded to clear the dishes from the table. "Where shall I put them?" she asked, as she carried them into the kitchen.

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"Just put them in the sink, and we'll wash them after we've had something to eat."

"I can't see why folks make such a fuss of washing dishes now-a-days, with all the conveniences they have about them," continued the old lady. "It wasn't like when your mother was a little girl, and we had to go about thirty or forty rods through the snow after water, and then find the well frozen over. Now all you have to do is to turn a faucet and you have hot or cold water right at your hand."

"What did you do, grandma, when the well was frozen over?" Edith was greatly interested.

"Why then, child, we'd have to melt snow. It would seem as if we'd never get enough melted for the washing on a Monday. And now, with your hot water, your washing machines, light that you can carry around on the end of a string, and lanterns that you can put in your pocket, you young folks don't know what work is."

"Yes, and they have machines to wash dishes, now, mother."

"For lan's sake! What'll they be doing next, I'd like to know? But I should think folks could break enough as it is, without

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using a machine for it. There's only four whole cups left of that china set that Martin got for you from New York.

"But, mother, I've have that ever since Alice was a baby. But it almost broke my heart every time a piece was broken."

"More's the pity you couldn't take better care of it. But your father always said, 'come easy, go easy.' And that's the trouble with the younger generation—they think it'll always come easy, and they need have no thought for to-morrow."

"Why, Mrs. Conrad!" exclaimed Edith. "You don't mean to say that those biscuits are ready so soon?" as she pulled the pan out of the oven.

"Oh, yes; it only takes a few minutes."

"At school, when we made biscuits, it seemed to take ever so long!"

"At school!" sniffed grandma. "The idea of trying to teach girls how to cook at school."

"I think it is a good thing, mother. Now, take Mrs. Baxter, the station agent's wife, she never had a chance to learn to cook at home, and it would have been a blessing to her if she had had a chance at school"

"Why didn't her mother teach her, I'd

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like to know? When I was a girl, we were taught not only how to bake and sew, but to spin and weave. We not only made our own clothes, but the men folks' as well."

"Mrs. Baxter told me that her mother wouldn't let her do anything in the kitchen. She said that if Effie learned how to do housework she always would have to do it," explained Mrs. Conrad.

"It's some queer notions some people get, it strikes me. Now that her mother has to live with them and the girl has to do all the work, it would have been a good thing if she hadn't had such high notions. I tell you, Martha, I've always noticed that when folks have such hoity-toity ideas they're riding for a fall some time along. I tell you, Martha, every girl ought to know how to cook before she takes a man. Take Joe's mother, for instance. I've always believed that if Joe's father had had better cooking at home, it would have added a good many years to his life."

"Why, mother! You know Mary's health has been none of the best, and she has always had to have a maid."

"Humph," sniffed the old lady. "You know as well as I do that Mary always goes

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to bed for every ache and pain. A lot of her poor health is in her mind's eye. Of course she's had to have a hired girl. She never was a good cook herself, and of course she wouldn't be able to tell anyone else what to do. I think Joseph's health would be a good deal better if he had more wholesome things to eat."

"Mother, you're as funny as a crutch. The idea of Joe having poor health!"

"Say what you like, Martha, he's often complained about his stomach, and I've noticed too he's always ready to have a bite of your cooking. My only hope is that he'll have sense enough to marry someone who knows how to do; not that they'll have to, because all the Washburne men were forehanded, and provided well for their women folks."

"Now just sit down, Edith, and help yourself," said Mrs. Conrad. "I'll be there as soon as I fill this maple syrup pitcher."

"Maybe the child would like some honey with her biscuit, Martha." Grandma was always more gracious after she had her cup of coffee in the morning.

"Why, yes; I forgot all about it."

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"And is that from the farm too?" Edith inquired.

"Why of course; where else should it come from? When my father started west with his family, they told him that this was a land flowing with milk and honey, but it was hard work and a good many years before we had even the common comforts," and grandma proceeded to entertain Edith with an account of the trials and tribulations that they had passed through in conquering the wilderness.

Alice and her father always came home to dinner together, leaving the store in charge of the clerk.

"Ma," exclaimed Alice, as she was helping her mother set the table, "they're awfully busy at the Gazette office, and Amy wants me every afternoon I can spare."

"Can your father spare you?"

"Oh, yes; just afternoons, you know. When the mail comes in I'll run down and take care of it, and then go back to the bindery work."

"Bindery work," exclaimed Edith, who had overheard the conversation; "isn't that the same as book binding?"

"Not exactly," explained Alice, "book

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binding is different. The binding they do at the Gazette office is what they call 'pamphlet binding,' or 'catalog binding.' They're printing a catalog there this week, and I'm going to help Amy on the binding."

"May I go down with you this afternoon?" Edith's interest was a surprise even to Alice.

"Why, of course. We can talk while I work."

"But I want to help you. I want to learn to do something. I'm so tired of not knowing how to do anything. Why does everyone treat me as if I were a child? I want to learn how to do some kind of work, and I believe this is my chance. I could never do it in Grafton."

"Why, Edith!" exclaimed Alice, "I never had any idea you really wanted to work. You wouldn't make much at first. They pay me piece work."

"Oh, it isn't the money! I want to feel that I'm doing something."

"All right, if you want to, Edith. Of course it's nice, clean work, but I'm afraid you won't like it."

"I'm going to try it anyway," and there was a determined look on Edith's face that Alice had never seen before.

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After dinner Edith, to the surprise of all the others, assisted in clearing off the table. Alice was about to remonstrate, and ask her to visit with grandma, but her mother forestalled her by saying:

"You girls can take care of the dishes while I make the beds, and then Alice can help me bring in the clothes."

"Company wash the dishes? Why, ma!"

"Edith won't mind," smiled her mother.

"I was helping your mother this morning, wasn't I? And I didn't break anything, either."

Alice laughed merrily at the anxious expression on Edith's face, and said:

"Why, I didn't mean you couldn't, but that you didn't have to. You dry them, while I wash them."

"And I'm going to help take the clothes off the line," added Edith, quietly.

"My, you're full of surprises! What would Mrs. Eaton say if she saw you now?" surveying her admiringly, as she stood in the middle of the floor wearing one of Alice's gingham aprons, dish towel in hand.

"Oh, she would think I was everlastingly disgraced," and both girls laughed merrily.

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Grandma Washburne, attracted by the sounds of mirth, looked into the kitchen.

"Well, well, you look just like your mother now, child," she said with a smile.

"You approve of my costume then?"

"Yes, I think it's quite becoming," and after nodding her head emphatically, she retired to her room.

"I care more for what she thinks than a dozen Mrs. Eatons," Edith confided to Alice. But the latter did not inquire the reason.

The girls had just finished when Mrs. Conrad came down stairs, and the three were soon busy taking the clothes from the line.

"All grandma's things go into this old-fashioned rush basket," said Alice, "and we'll have to be careful with them."

"Yes, girls. fold them down smooth. You see," Mrs. Conrad explained to Edith, "mother don't like anything ironed except her collars and aprons and handkerchiefs, and she always does that herself. She says the iron always takes the nice smell away."

"Oh, they do smell so nice and sweet!" exclaimed Edith, pressing a sheet to her face.

A fortune awaits the chemist who can distil a perfume equal to the odor that Dame Nature imparts to well-laundered linen.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

"BOARDING WITH THE PROPRIETOR."



BILL had busied himself with getting the press ready while Jim was locking up the catalog pages.

"What!" he exclaimed, as he walked over to the imposing stone where Jim was working.

"Got her nearly ready? Does she lift?"

"All but one line there. Just a cardboard in there, and you can have her."

"You locked that up quicker than I could myself."

"Yep?" inquiringly. "Well, you've got everything handy here so a fellow can make some time, and then the matter was well justified."

"Amy set most of that, and she does good work," nodding his head toward the type case where his sister was working.

Amy happened to glance toward them as he spoke. Getting down from her stool, she walked over to the stone.

"You men criticising my work?"

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"Yes," teased her brother. "Can't make it lift."

"I don't believe it," and she turned to Jim. "Are you having much trouble with it?"

"Believe me, young lady, if you set up those pages you're more entitled to a card in the Typographical Union than a good many fellows I've seen. The job is all right, all right, and I'd as soon work with you as a man."

"There now, Will! I'm glad someone appreciates my work."

"I was just teasing you, sis."

"Well, I'll forgive you this time," as she returned to her work.

"You're not the only printer who has said that about Amy and her work," said Bill, proudly. "Now we can get that on the press, and be well on toward the make ready before dinner. With good luck we'll have this form off today."

"I'm glad I ain't going to feed that job," sung out George, as he washed up at the sink a little later.

"What are you washing up so soon for?" asked Bill. "It isn't dinner time."

"Close to it. Don't you want me to take a press proof up to the works?"

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"Why, 'tis near noon. George, call up Mr. Ingram, and tell him he can see a press proof on the way to dinner. Jim, we'll put the draw sheet on, and pull a proof, and he can look it over during the noon hour."

"Aren't you men going to dinner today?" inquired Amy. "Mamma will have it all on the table."

"You tell her we'll be right along, sis."

"Where's a good place to feed your face in this burg?" inquired Jim, as they were washing up.

"Why, I'm taking you to the best place I know—that's up to the house."

"No, I mean a restaurant, or a lunch counter." The bugaboo of "boarding with the proprietor" was uppermost in Jim's mind.

"Oh, you're coming up to the house; mother's got dinner all ready, and is expecting us."

"Well, just as you say, but I think I'd sooner go to a restaurant," reluctantly. "Doesn't anyone stay in the office during lunch time? I thought that fellow was going to O.K. that proof."

"Oh, he'll find it all right. We just lock the door and hang the key on the nail. He knows where it is. The first one back from

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dinner opens the door," explained Bill, hanging up the key while he was talking.

The Comstock family had just seated themselves at the table when Bill and Jim arrived. Mr. Comstock had not been in the office during the morning, and it was at the dinner table that he first met Jim.

"Dad, this is Mr. Goodman. Mother, and Mrs. Pettigill." Bill's sweeping introduction included the widow who helped Mrs. Comstock in taking care of the house.

"I'm glad to meet you," and Mr. Comstock shook hands cordially.

"Just call me plain Jim. I'll answer to that better. Mister makes me feel old."

"All right, Jim; just as you like. Did you work for Mr. Bevan in Grafton?"

"No; I just happened to drop off in Grafton last week. Let's see; what day is this?"

"Why, this is Monday, and a whole week's work ahead of us," ruefully from George.

"We heard about Jeremiah's lamentations at church last night, and that'll last us for the week, without listening to yours." And then turning to Jim, Bill inquired: "Known Dick for some time, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes; but I've been going so swift

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since I struck Grafton, that I've kind of lost track of the days. Friday morning I dropped off there; worked Friday, Friday night, Saturday and Saturday night. This morning I happened to blow into Dick's office and he hustled me up here. He's got some office, all right, all right. I said years ago he'd be running a paper of his own some day. I'm some prophet."

"I don't know—sometimes when a man is in charge of a newspaper he finds out that the paper is running him instead of him running the paper," remarked Mr. Comstock, meditatively.

"That's no lie, believe me. I remember a case in one of the large cities where a man was ambitious to be a newspaper editor. And he got out a corking good paper—that sheet certainly took the cake from a news standpoint, and mechanically it was one of the best papers in the country, but he had to sell it."

"Couldn't he make it pay?" inquired Amy.

"No. If he had kept it a-going it would have taken his whole bake shop—cakes, pies, bread and doughnuts, and he certainly did sell a raft of doughnuts. Those sinkers he

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made kept many a poor print from starvation."

"You came from the city, then?" inquired Mr. Comstock.

"Yes, I got out as soon as the getting was good."

"I understand they have some great shops there," remarked Bill.

"Yes, some joints, all right, all right. But things were pretty bad this last winter. Lots of places they only worked part time, and what work they did was at cut-throat prices, if what I've heard was true."

"Then work in city offices isn't all honey pie, either;" from Mr. Comstock.

"You're dead right there, Mr. Comstock. Everything is 'efficiency' now. You hear nothing but 'efficiency', 'specialization', and all that kind of dope. One man does this, another man does that, and they've got the work so subdivided that a man is just like a cog in a big machine."

"Not very pleasant working that way, I shouldn't think."

"Pleasant! Nothing pleasant about it. That isn't work. That's labor; toil, I call it. Then they've got you numbered, same as a convict in the penitentiary. Come in the

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morning, punch the clock; go out to lunch, punch the clock; come in from lunch, punch the clock; go home at night, punch the clock. If you forget to punch the clock, you don't get paid."

"Even if you are there and working?" asked Amy in surprise.

"That cuts no ice. If the clock says you ain't there, you ain't there. What the clock says goes. I remember a case in one of the big shops when one of the proof readers forgot to 'ring in', as they call it, when he came in from lunch, and he lost half a day's pay."

"Why, couldn't he prove he was there?"

"Sure he could prove it. His time ticket showed he was there, all right, all right,"

"Time ticket, what's that?" asked Amy.

"Time ticket? Well, you see, besides punching the clock, every man working in one of those big shops has a time ticket. When he starts to work in the morning he takes a time ticket, puts down his name and the number he has on the clock; then there is a space for the number of the job, the name of the job, the kind of work he is doing—that has a number too—composition is No. 1, galley correction No. 2, and so on. Well, this proofreader's time ticket showed

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that he had been reading proof—that's No. 13—and revising—that's No. 15—on different jobs from 12:45 to 5:45, but it didn't match up with the time on the clock, so he never did get paid for that half day. And that fellow had been working for that firm for over fifteen years."

"You bet I'd get my pay, or know the reason why," vehemently from George.

"Oh, he made a kick, all right, all right; but it didn't do him any good."

"And did he still continue to work for such people?" asked Mrs. Comstock.

"Oh, yes; the last I knew he was still there. What else could he do? He'd been there so long that he'd become a part of the machine—one of the cogs, you know—and he'd worn into the other cogs, so that if he should quit, and try to get work somewhere else it would be like putting an old gear into a new press—she wouldn't run smooth."

"I guess that is a pretty good illustration, Jim," commented Mr. Comstock. "But what is all this 'efficiency' for—to get more work out?"

"That's the idea. You see, they've got everything all cut up, so that a man does

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only one kind of work, and they keep him on that all the time."

"You mean there is the composing room, the pressroom, and the bindery?" said Bill.

"Worse than that. Take the composing room, for instance. Some offices just do commercial work, some do blank book work; then there's catalog printers, label printers, and some offices that just set advertisements."

"By specializing that way, don't they make more money?"

"One would think so, but I've watched a lot of those joints, and they seem to be always changing owners. First one man is running the place, then when you come around again, about a year later, there's a new name on the door, but the same old pile of junk, just the same."

"Don't they charge a fair price for their work, or is it poor management?"

"Search me. They scheme every way to keep down the costs—hear a lot about 'cost systems' and all that kind of dope. But I think they don't charge enough for the work they turn out. The poor comp isn't much better off than he was before all these improved machines were put in."

"Why not?"

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"He never can get in full time. Suppose the scale is higher than it used to be, if he don't get in full time he isn't any better off."

"Is your trunk at the depot, Jim," inquired Mr. Comstock as they rose from the table.

"Trunk! Nothing doing. Why?"

"I was going to say that if your trunk was at the depot, I would attend to hauling it up to the house."

"Oh; well, I've a suit case that I left with a bright young lady in the postoffice. The way she piked me off as the new print got my goat, all right, all right."

"We'll get it tonight, Jim. Meantime, we'll get the press running."

"I've the room all ready for him, William, and I'll have Sarah get the bureau drawers cleared out for his things." Mrs. Comstock had a way of making people feel at home, and Jim concluded that "boarding with the proprietor" wasn't such a calamity as he had anticipated.

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE TRAIL OF THE VIAL



OWHERE would you find a more practical or methodical a person than Amy Comstock. It was she who had arranged with Alice to take care of the folding of the sheets that made up the catalog which the Gazette office was printing for the plow works. She had spoken to Alice Saturday about the matter, anticipating that there might be some difficulty in getting an extra printer, and then she would be at liberty to assist Bill in the composing room.

Ever since they were children Alice had helped Amy in the printing office, and had learned how to fold, insert, cover, run the wire stitcher, and all the other operations that would be necessary on a catalog of this nature. While she was not so rapid a worker as one who devoted her whole time to it, she was very careful and accurate, and Bill was always pleased to secure her services whenever they had a rush of that kind of work and Amy could not handle it alone. Alice

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always took great delight in putting up the mail for the out-of-town subscribers, and every Thursday night she would assist Amy in folding the papers as they came from the press, and in addressing the wrappers.

As soon as Amy returned from dinner she laid out the sheets which had been printed the previous Saturday. Carefully folding one she took it over to her brother.

"Will, see if this is all right, and then when Alice comes she can go right ahead with it. I folded it by the corners, and it looks all right to me."

"Yes, that's all right. Have her fold them by the corners. I trimmed the stock all around so as to make it as easy as possible in the bindery."

"Are you forelady of the bindery, too?" grinned Jim, who was waiting for Bill to regulate the ink on the press.

"Oh, she's the whole works around here," put in George, who was busy feeding one of the job presses.

"You just watch the color on that job, and if you feed one sheet at a time the job will last longer and look better." Amy had glanced around just as George missed an impression on the press.

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"See that he feeds them down to the guides, Amy," said Bill, as he turned his attention to the cylinder press. "All right, Jim, throw on the belt, and let her go."

It was a busy scene that greeted Edith's eyes when she and Alice arrived at the Gazette office shortly after two o'clock.

"Amy, I've brought some one to help me," was Alice's greeting, as they entered.

"Why, Edith Renard! I'm certainly glad to see you. No, I can't shake hands. Perhaps my little finger will do. My hands are too dirty," said Amy, impressing a kiss on Edith's cheek, and holding her ink-stained hands high in the air. "I heard you were here, but I was too busy to come over to see you last night; we are awfully crowded with work just now."

"Oh, yes, I know what keeps you busy Sunday nights," laughed Alice. "But Amy, Edith wants to learn bindery work! What do you think of that? Isn't it the limit?"

"She does?" was the surprised exclamation. "Well, it is cleaner than setting type," exhibiting her hands with a somewhat rueful expression.

"Why, how in the world do you ever get

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your hands clean?" and Edith had a horror-stricken expression on her face.

"Wash 'em," laconically. "It comes off. I've the sheets all ready for you, Alice; they fold by the corners," and she led the way to the long table where the catalog pages were ready for Alice to fold.

"And may Edith help me?" eagerly. "I'll show her how."

"Well, you know Will is awfully particular about this job, and I'll not have time to teach you, and" turning to Edith, "I'm afraid you'll get tired folding all day."

"But you do it, and I don't see why I can't. Maybe Alice will show me how, if you will let her."

"I'll show her, if you don't mind, and I'll see that it is done right. Now please say yes;" and Amy could not resist Alice's pleadings.

After the girls had settled down to work Amy explained to Bill the new arrangement.

"Very well, sis, but understand, no slop work goes. After all the care we have taken in setting up the job, and in the presswork, we don't want to spoil it in the bindery."

"I'll watch it closely for you, Will."

No one knew better than Amy the vast

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amount of care that must be exercised in producing even one little job of printing. One who would aspire to be a competent printer must not only be a master of details, but should also possess knowledge almost equal to one who had taken a liberal course in one of our colleges. In addition to this he must be an artist and a mechanic. The average reader can hardly realize that an ordinary book page of two hundred and fifty words contains at least two thousand separate pieces of type, and that the misplacement of one of those pieces of metal by that individual, oftentimes sarcastically referred to as "the intelligent compositor"—a comma, a period, or a quotation mark—may change the entire idea that the writer wishes to convey to his readers.

The girls worked steadily until half past five, when Edith exclaimed:

"Why, Alice, you've folded three times as many as I have!"

"Well, you've done real well, I think; don't you, Amy?" calling across the room to her. "Come over here and see."

"Just a minute while I finish this line." After looking over their work, she said: "I certainly think you have done real well."

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"Do you think I'll ever be able to do it as quickly as Alice?"

"Of course you will, you little goosie," laughed Alice. "I was just as awkward as you when I first did bindery work, wasn't I, Amy? How long are you going to work?"

"I am going to finish this page; it will take about ten minutes, and then they can have another form for the press the first thing in the morning. But you needn't wait for me, girls."

"Indeed we will. Supper won't be ready until six anyway."

"How much have I made, Alice?" inquired Edith, surveying the pile of folded sheets before her. "I don't believe I've earned my salt."

Taking a pencil from her hair Alice made a number of figures on a sheet of paper. Going over them carefully, she said:

"You've made exactly twenty-three and three-quarters cents."

"Whatever will I do with so much wealth?" then doing some mental calculating; "you've made about twenty-two cents an hour?"

"About that. I don't think that is so bad, do you?"

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"But it will be a long time before I'll be able to do as well."

"Oh, yes, you will. Just a little practice, that's all," was the cheering response.

As the three girls walked down the street together, Alice asked Amy to come over for the evening, but she begged to be excused, explaining that she had some writing to do.

"Oh, yes, I know what that writing is. Edith, you ought to see the nice, big, fat letters she sends to him every few days," joked Alice. "It costs her a lot for postage. But you'll come over tomorrow night, won't you? I am going to get up another party before Edith goes back, and you always have such splendid ideas, and can always think of something new. Isn't that so, Edith?"

"Indeed it is. I'll never forget the good time I had at that last party Alice had, and the fortune telling—that was such fun. Oh, by the way, girls, I borrowed that funny bottle with the mysterious liquid that we used in writing the fortunes."

"You borrowed it!" exclaimed both the girls.

"Why, yes; I meant to tell you, but forgot all about it until just now. I intended to have a party just like yours, fortune tell-

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ing and all, but papa and Mrs. Eaton would not let me have a party like that, and so they arranged that old reception; I hated it!"

"But, Edith, where is my Vial now? That is my Vial of Vishnu, and when the Hindoo gave it to me he said that I must never allow it to go out of my possession—that it might bring trouble, and all sorts of horrid things." It seemed to practical Amy that she could see the dark, oriental face of Narisiyadi, and hear him say: "It must not leave you without your consent—may bring trouble—perhaps death. With you it means peace and happiness."

"Why, Amy, I never thought that you would feel that way about it, or I never would have taken it! I was going to tell you about it then, but we were so hurried to get to the depot, I didn't have a chance. I told papa about it when I asked him if I couldn't have a party like Alice's, but he said it would be too much like copying, and he said he would take care of the bottle for me until I could return it to you."

"So your father has it now?"

"Yes. I'm going to write to Mrs. Eaton to send me up some clothes and I'll tell her

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to ask papa for it, and send it up with them. That'll be all right, won't it?"

"Of course it will, but somehow I feel funny about it. The Hindoo was so earnest, so sincere, and predicted such awful calamities, and I do hope it isn't lost."

"I promise you that I will write tonight, and have Mrs. Eaton send it to me. Now, you will forgive me, won't you?"

"Why, yes, Edith; of course I will."

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CHAPTER XXX

THE VAIN SEARCH FOR THE VIAL



RS. EATON received the letter from Edith on the late delivery Tuesday afternoon, and she immediately packed up the clothing which had been designated. She had intended to speak to the mayor about the Vial when he came to dinner—dinner in the Renard household was always between six and seven o'clock. But Renard was so concerned with the results of the election that he did not come home until all the other members of the household had retired, therefore it was not until Wednesday, at the breakfast table that she had an opportunity to speak to him.

"I received a letter from Miss Edith yesterday, and she asked me to send her some more clothes, sir."

"So? Well, the little girl is having a good time, I guess, and isn't worrying about her poor old dad." Renard was in good humor. The election had gone to suit him. He'd been re-elected, and while a number of

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men had been elected aldermen who were not to his liking, he believed there were ways of bringing them around to his way of thinking.

"Oh, sir, she sent her love to you, and told me to ask you about a bottle that she gave you to take care of—she said you would know what she meant, sir."

"Bottle, bottle—eh—what kind of a bottle?"

"I don't know, sir, except that I would fancy it was some queer kind of a bottle, sir. She gave it some outlandish name. Just a moment, sir, and I will get the young lady's letter." And she went upstairs after it, having used it in checking up the clothing Edith had sent for.

"A queer kind of bottle!" mused Renard. "What did we do with it? Wolff must have it. I'll call him up as soon as I get to the office, and get it from him." And then a feeling of apprehension began to creep over him. Suppose Wolff had lost it, or someone had gained possession of it. The thought sent a chill through his entire body. His face turned ashen pale. There was a choking sensation in his throat, and his tongue felt too large for his mouth. The objects in the room blurred before his eyes, and when Mrs. Eaton returned, she found him with his

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head resting heavily on his right hand, his elbow on the table, while his left arm hung limply at his side.

"Oh, Mr. Renard! What is the matter, sir!"

"Nothing—nothing. I just felt a slight chill, that's all." But the words seemed hard to form, and he spoke with difficulty.

"What can I do for you, sir? Shall I call a physician?"

"No. Make me a hot toddy, and then I'll feel better."

Mrs. Eaton bustled around, and soon had a steaming glass of spiced brandy for him. "I've put some mace in it, sir. I've always found that to be good. But I think, sir, you are devoting too much of your precious strength for the public welfare, sir."

"Without doubt," grimly. "Did you find the letter?"

"Yes sir. Whatever did I do with it? I had it a minute ago," and she looked around in bewilderment, then picked the letter up from the floor. "I dropped it sir, when I saw the condition you were in when I came down stairs."

He read the letter, which simply said that she was going to stay in Ripton several days

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longer, and would Mrs. Eaton please send her the clothes listed. But it was the paragraph relating to the Vial that interested Renard. It read:

"Give my love to papa, and ask him for the Vial of Vishnu, which he is taking care of for me. He will know what I mean. And, Mrs. Eaton, I want you to be sure and send that up with the clothes. It's a peculiar looking bottle, and you must be ever so careful that the stopper doesn't fall out. The stopper is like a human head. Now be sure and send it, for it belongs to one of the girls, and she is awfully anxious about it."

"She doesn't say when she is coming home," and there was a tone in his voice that Mrs. Eaton had never heard before.

"No, sir, she doesn't. I wish the young lady was home, sir."

"I wish so too, Mrs. Eaton."

"And shall I send the young lady her luggage, sir?"

"Oh, yes; have James take it to the depot."

"But the bottle, sir, what shall I do about that?"

"I'll take care of that. I'll write to her when I'm in the office. Tell James I want him to look down in the machine."

"I'll do that; you are not thinking of going to the depot today, ailing as you are, sir."

Renard had returned to Renard's and had waved all objections aside. As

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he climbed into the limousine, somewhat unsteadily, Mrs. Eaton, who was watching from the doorway, shook her head, and turning to one of the servants, she said:

"Indeed, the master is in a bad way. I remember when my sister was at service in the Lord Mayor's house at home, that his highness went away to some public doings, and he was stricken just as he was making a speech."

As soon as Renard arrived at his office he telephoned to Wolff to come over and see him immediately. After telling him about Edith's letter, he impressed on him the importance of sending the Vial to her at once.

"Where is it?" asked Wolff. "I thought you put it in your pocket Sunday night."

"Haven't you got it, Fred? I thought you took charge of it."

"No, Mr. Renard. The last I saw of it was when it was on the table between us Sunday night. Good heavens, what is the matter with you?" Renard had slumped down in his chair, and had turned deathly pale.

"Nothing, Fred, nothing. I'll feel better in a minute, and we'll go down to the corner and have the bartender mix me a hot drink. But Fred, see if you can't locate that bottle."

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"I will, Mr. Renard. I'll take a look around the press room, but I'll have to be careful about making inquiries."

"Yes, do that. I feel better now, but we'll go down to the corner anyway."

Immediately upon his return to the News office, Wolff went into the press room, and looked sharply around to see if there was any trace of the Vial. In order to avoid suspicion, he asked the pressman if he had a good supply of colored inks, knowing that it was his custom to keep his colored inks in a cabinet.

"Why, I think we have a good supply of all colors, Mr. Wolff," going to the cabinet, and opening the doors, so that he could have a good view of the shelves. "We haven't been running much on colors lately, but if you are going to order any ink, you might order a pound of mixing white. If we should get a tint job, it would come in handy."

"All right," was the answer. He had carefully scanned the shelves when the pressman had opened the doors of the cabinet, but there was no Vial to be seen. The table where he and Renard had worked Sunday night was now filled with other jobs of printing, and the pretense of examining

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them gave him an opportunity to make a most minute search. Passing over to the composing room side of the building, he engaged Stevens in conversation, hoping that there might be a trace of the Vial there. Concluding that it had been swept out by the janitor he returned to the front office.

"The old man is watching things pretty close, isn't he?" inquired the pressman of Stevens a few minutes later, as he handed him a job to O.K.'d.

"Oh, I don't know. Why?"

"He asked me about my colored inks. Never did that before. Whenever I wanted any colors, I've always had to make a holler for 'em. Wonder what's eating him?"

Wolff immediately telephoned to Renard when he returned to the office, but the wire was busy. He intended to call again, but did not get an opportunity, having determined to make a trip to Ripton, hoping he might see Edith, and also intending to interview Kleine in regard to the tax list. Thus the incident in connection with the Vial passed out of his mind.

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CHAPTER XXXI

THE COMSTOCKS AND THE INDEPENDENT



EDITH awoke as soon as Alice on the morning following her first experience as a working girl. There was a new light in her eyes as the two girls sat down to the breakfast table together.

"Why, Edith!" exclaimed Mrs. Conrad. "Up so early?"

"Yes, I'm going to work at the same time as Alice."

"Yes, ma, what do you think of that? I wanted her to stay in bed, and have breakfast with grandma, but no, she's made up her mind to go right down to the printing office and work there this morning."

"And you're not too tired?"

"Oh, I was tired last night. My back ached, and my arms ached, but I don't feel it now. My, but I did sleep soundly though! I never woke once all night long."

"It was a good, healthy tiredness, then. I guess there's work enough for both of you, isn't there?" laughed Mrs. Conrad.

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"Oh my yes, ma, and Edith takes to it just like a duck to water."

"It's nice of you to say that, Alice. But, Mrs. Conrad, I do like the work, and wish I knew as much as Amy. There's lots to learn."

"But Amy's grown right up with it, child. Rome wasn't built in a day, remember."

Amy was agreeably surprised that Edith should report for work so early in the morning. Tuesday was one of the busy days in the office. The Gazette was an eight-page paper, with six columns to the page. Being what was known as "all home print," the inside four pages (two, three, six and seven), were always printed Tuesday; leaving the other four pages to be printed on Thursday. The competent assistance which Jim had rendered had put the work much further forward than anyone had expected.

Although Mr. Comstock spent most of his time looking after the subscriptions and advertising, on "press days", as Tuesday and Thursday were called, he usually spent a greater portion of his time in the office.

Ripton, as well as a large number of the smaller villages and towns throughout the state, was also having its local election, but

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as there was only one ticket in the field very little interest was taken in it. The question of saloons or no saloons had been settled very emphatically by a vote of two to one against the proposition the year before.

Amy and her mother had voted as a matter of principle, and Alice had voted, as she expressed it, "just for the fun of it." Mrs. Conrad told Grandma Washburne that if she wanted to cast a ballot she would go with her, but the old lady had said that as long as there was no intention of increasing the taxes or put the saloons back into business, she "wouldn't bother with voting."

Amy Comstock was not the kind of girl who would needlessly "borrow trouble," as she expressed it, but a foreboding of evil seemed to oppress her all day Tuesday. Many times during the day she caught herself absently gazing out of the window; it seemed as if she could not concentrate her mind upon her work. Why was it she could not banish the thought of that Hindoo from her mind? But nothing out of the ordinary happened. The work in the office moved along in accordance with the schedule Bill had marked out.

Late in the evening it was rumored around

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town that the entire Citizen's Ticket had been elected in Grafton, but when Amy asked her father about it on her return from a visit to the Conrad home, he informed her that he had heard such a report, but had been unable to confirm it.

She was, of course, greatly concerned as to the result of the election, and she knew that Dick was aware of her interest. If the Reform Ticket had been successful, Dick might at least have sent her a telegram. The fact that he had not done so, aroused many misgivings. She had never allowed herself to indulge in superstitious ideas, but somehow the passing of the Vial from her possession, added to the absence of news from Grafton, aroused such disquietude that she passed a very restless night.

George was the one who brought the mail from the postoffice Wednesday morning. There was a letter for Amy, with the Independent business card in the corner. She lost no time in investigating the contents. Of course it was from Dick, but it was not a lengthy epistle, and simply announced that on the face of the returns the Citizen's Ticket had been successful, but six reform aldermen had been elected.

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"I am writing this in a hurry," the letter concluded, "but will send you fuller details later. I am firmly convinced that there is fraud somewhere. When you get the Independent tomorrow night you will understand what I mean."

"Poor Dick," she said softly to herself. "I do hope he will not be discouraged."

Bill had just walked over to where Amy was standing. "Amy, I wish you would tell that kid to get busy on that country correspondence. He's been standing there reading that paper and talking with Edith ever since he came in from the postoffice."

"All right, Will, but I just received a letter from Dick, and the Reform Ticket is beaten. Isn't that too bad?"

"That's a d——n shame. Excuse my French, sis, but I couldn't help it."

"I almost feel like crying, Will."

"Don't do that, sis; cheer up. Remember, Dick gets the tax list. We can't expect to have everything," and he squeezed her hand affectionately. "But do get that kid to work."

Before going over to the bindery table, Amy folded up the letter and put it in her apron pocket. George had secured a copy of

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one of the metropolitan dailies and had it spread out on the table near Edith.

"George," she said, quietly, "papa left a lot of country correspondence on your case, and you'd better be working on it."

"Oh, I'm going right to work. I was just telling Edith that her father had been elected again," and folding up the paper he walked over to his type case and went to work.

"I suppose you were glad to hear the news, Edith," and Amy made an effort to smile.

Edith did not answer immediately, but studied intently one of the printed pages before her, then turning her face slowly toward Amy, she said:—"Do you know, I almost wish he hadn't been elected?"

"Why, Edith Renard! Why not?"

"Because for the next two years I'll be hearing Mrs. Eaton's twaddle about the "lord mayor at home" and what an honored position papa has in the community. Somehow, it has always seemed as if I couldn't associate with the other girls on account of it. Do you know, it was only last Saturday, when Julia Ross called to see me, that Mrs. Eaton treated her so coolly that Julia spoke to me about it, and you know that Julia is one of the nicest girls in Grafton. The only

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way I can explain it is that Julia and her mother opposed papa for mayor. And now that papa is re-elected, I suppose I'll have to be a 'fine lady' for another two years."

Edith looked so doleful that Amy had to laugh. "Really, it is a peculiar situation. I don't know whether to offer congratulations or condolences."

"What I want, Amy, is the friendship of you girls," and there was a wistful look in her dark eyes. Amy patted her on the cheek with the back of her hand.

The Grafton Independent, which came to the Gazette office as an "exchange", arrived on the train that was due in Ripton about seven o'clock in the evening. The Grafton News which they received was the noon edition, and arrived about two o'clock. Mr. Comstock brought the afternoon mail from the postoffice, and Amy eagerly tore off the wrapper. One glance at the headlines made her sick at heart, and laying the paper on her father's desk without a word, she turned to her work.

Later in the day George had occasion to put some proof on his father's desk, and seeing the copy of the News with the pictures of the successful candidates, he picked it up

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and carried it over to the case where he was working. He called Jim's attention to it.

"See those pictures? That one is Edith's father. He's just been re-elected mayor of Grafton."

Jim was not particularly interested. He knew Bill was anxious to get the catalog finished up that week, and he only intended to give the paper a passing glance, but as he looked at the picture of Renard, a faint recollection came into his mind that he had seen that face before. He looked at it intently, but could not make up his mind as to where he had seen the original.

"And he's mayor of that burg, eh?"

"Yes, he was just re-elected."

"Good-looking guy, all right, all right; but I haven't time to look at pictures now. Your brother wants this form." And Jim turned to his work. But he puzzled over the problem all the afternoon. Where had he seen that face before?

There had been some delay in getting the proofs to the plow works in the afternoon, and it was at the supper table that Mr. Comstock reported that he had met Mr. Ingram on the street, and that he had given them to

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him. Bill examined them before he sat down to the table.

"Gee! but he didn't do a thing to some of these pages. I was in hopes we could get that form locked up tonight so as to get it off before we run the paper."

"So you can, if I help you," said Amy. "I've nothing to do tonight but help mamma finish that waist she is making for me, and that can wait just as well as not."

"Will you, sis? I didn't want to ask you. You've been working right hard on this job."

"We all work, then," spoke up Jim. "I got a good fall out of that country correspondence this afternoon while waiting for those proofs. But you can count on me, all right, all right."

"Yes, everybody works but dad, and he walks around all day," but George said it in such a low voice that his father did not hear him.

"What did you say, young man?" from the head of the table.

"He'd better not repeat what he said," admonished his mother, and George shamefacedly finished his supper in silence.

Mr. Comstock called at the postoffice, as was his custom, before returning to the

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Gazette office. Although Amy was anxious to see the Independent, she did not interrupt her work until the last page had been corrected and placed on the stone. When she had washed her hands and walked over to her father's desk, she found him with the copy of the Independent spread out before him. Mr. Comstock was reading Dick's report very carefully, and for some time did not notice that Amy was looking over his shoulder.

"What do you think of it, father!"

"I'm afraid, little girl, that the boy has made a bad mess of it."

"But if he can prove what he says to be true. I don't think Dick would make such a charge unless he believed it to be true."

"Believing a thing to be true, and proving that it is true are two different propositions. I'm afraid that he'll have a hard time to prove it. Those fellows may cause him a lot of trouble."

"What can they do, father?" Amy was alarmed at her father's serious manner.

"Well, they could arrest him for criminal libel, and that would handicap him in getting out his paper, and this week of all weeks," mused the old man.

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"What do you mean by 'this week of all weeks', father?"

"Didn't Dick tell you, Amy, the conditions which Kleine imposed when we went to see him about the tax list?"

"The only condition I know is that we were to print it in the Gazette office, and send it down to him to be used as a supplement to the Independent."

"There was another condition. Dick was to have the tax list if the daily was running Saturday night of this week, and of course that means the paper must not miss an issue."

"Why, father, Dick didn't say anything about that."

"No, I didn't expect that he would. Wolff is sharp after it, and if he can get it, by any hook or crook, he's going to do it. He was up here today, by the way."

"Then you think he'll put them up to some scheme to stop Dick's paper."

"I'm afraid so, Amy. It looks serious."

"And isn't there any way we can help? Oh, I wish I was in Grafton right now."

Comstock looked at the clock. "Nine thirty-five! The train for Grafton is due in fifteen minutes. Amy, tell your mother I've gone to Grafton. Will! Here a minute,"

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and showing Bill the Independent he hurriedly explained the seriousness of the situation. "You and Amy can get out the paper without me if I don't get back in time; you've done it before," and he put on his coat.

"Father, I'm going with you."

"Better take her along, dad; she'll worry if she don't go, and you may need her. Jim and I'll get out the paper all right, even if we have to work all night."

"All right, come along, Amy. But, Will, be sure to send word to your mother, so she won't worry."

As Amy and her father alighted from one of the passenger coaches of the train that arrived in Grafton an hour later, Dick was climbing up the steps of the smoking car. Had Dick boarded the train from the depot side, Amy might have been saved another restless night.

Amy informed her father that Dick had told her that he slept in the office, and they immediately made their way there. Not a light was to be seen. They rattled the door and rapped on the glass, but there was no response.

"I don't believe he is there, Amy. Can you imagine where we can find him?"

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"We could go over to the restaurant and telephone to the Dixons'. Ed Dixon would know where he is if anyone would."

"Why, Miss Comstock! You and your father here?—Dick?—Why, I left him at the office only a short time ago—He isn't there?—Say, you wait there at the restaurant, and I'll be right down. Goodby." Dixon had answered the telephone himself.

Ten minutes later the three were on their way to the Independent office, and Dixon was explaining how worried Dick was over his financial affairs.

"Why!" he exclaimed, as they came in sight of the office, "there seems to be a light there now," and they increased their speed to almost a run. It was Dixon who opened the door, Comstock and Amy following closely behind. The electric light over Dick's desk was glowing brightly, and two men turned startled faces toward the door as they entered. The larger man of the two had his hand on a bunch of keys, one of which was inserted in the lock of the desk.

"Well, Mr. Sloan, what is there in Mr. Bevan's desk that you would like to have?" asked Dixon, and there was a metallic tone in his voice. "If it's those stock certificates

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you are looking for, let me tell you gentlemen that they are in a safer place than that desk, and when wanted by the proper parties they will be produced."

"Where's Bevan?" growled Sloan, pulling the key out of the lock and slipping the bunch into his pocket. "I suppose he's flown the coop. What's your business here, Comstock?"

"I'm here to protect Mr. Bevan's interests. Now, have you any interest in this establishment? Are you a partner here, or have you or your friend there any financial interest?"

"I don't know as that is any of your business."

"No? Well, I am here in the interest of Mr. Bevan, and Mr. Dixon here, Mr. Bevan's counsel, as you well know, will vouch for my authority. Do you want anything better? Now, I ask you again, if you have any business here? If not, we will bid you good night."

The two men looked at each other in blank amazement, then Jackson drew Sloan to one side, and after a whispered conversation, they made a move toward the door.

"I take it, then, that you have no interest here, whatsoever?" Comstock stood to one side to allow them to pass out.

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"We will not ask you to commit yourselves, gentlemen," smiled Dixon. "Good night." And they passed out of the door.

"Bluffed to a finish!" laughed Dixon, as he shook hands with Comstock. "That certainly was smooth. But I don't quite see your game."

"We'll see how it works out tomorrow. Meantime, where do you suppose Dick is? Have you any idea?"

"He has a married sister in the city, papa. Could it be possible that he would go to see her and ask for help?"

"He might," said Dixon. "Dick is not the boy who is going to show the white feather. He's determined to keep this paper running, and tonight he told me for the first time about the tax list." Dixon told them of Dick's refusal to accept aid from his mother.

Comstock took a look around the plant, and returning to where Dixon and Amy were seated near Dick's desk he announced his plans:

"Ed, you're going to take Amy up to your house to stay for the night, and I'm going to bunk in Dick's bed there. It looks comfortable, and we'll see what turns up in the morning. If Dick shows up before that, all

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right. If those skunks come back here, I'll take care of them. If Dick doesn't show up in the morning, we'll go ahead and get out the paper. We'll hear from Dick, all right. Your mother has an extra room, hasn't she?"

"Surely. I told her you were here, and she is waiting for us."

"You don't think anything has happened to Dick, father? Really, I feel like staying right here until we hear from him."

"Nonsense, child. Run along and get a good night's sleep. You may have a big day's work before you tomorrow."

* * * * *

When Dick arrived in the city late on Wednesday night, he engaged a room at a medium priced hotel, and left a call for six-thirty the next morning. After a hasty breakfast he set out to interview the credit man at the paper house. But it was eight o'clock before he arrived. Dick lost no time in explaining the situation to him—how his plans for the stock company had fallen through, and that evidently he would have to "go it alone," as he expressed it. The credit man frowned, pursed his lips, removed his glasses, and rubbed them meditatively before making any comment. He had listened

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patiently until Dick had finished his story, and then he said:

"Mr. Bevan, you would no doubt be very much surprised if I should tell you how many times I have heard the same story. Every fall, and every spring, after an election, hundreds of papers have to suspend issue. Papers that have been started on some politicians' promises. If they win, all right. If they lose, they leave the little fellow with the dog to hold. I'm sorry to hear that you are so hard pushed. But what are your prospects, and what do you want us to do?"

Dick then told him about the promise of the tax list, and drawing his insurance policy from his pocket, he laid it down before the credit man. "There, he said, "is my insurance policy. It has a loan value of \$275.00, but I would have to send it to the home office, and it would take at least ten days to get returns from that. I thought perhaps you could offer some suggestion."

The frown disappeared from the credit man's face, the pursed lips formed themselves into a smile as he opened up the policy and scanned the columns of figures. He reached for the telephone on his desk, gave an order to the switch board operator, and said:

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"I am well acquainted with the head of the loan department of the branch here. As soon as I get him on the wire I'll know what we can do." While he was still talking the telephone bell rang. It was the insurance company. The credit man explained what he wanted to know, and apparently received a satisfactory answer. Rising from his desk, he reached for his hat and coat.

"Mr. Bevan, we'll go right over to the company's office and fix the matter up. You can make an assignment of the policy to me, and I will advance you the \$275. Then you can pay the amount of the draft we made on you, and will telegraph the bank to return it. In regard to the C. O. D. on the plates, you could leave that money here, and I will telephone to them to release the C. O. D. The note that is due on the press you had better take care of at your own bank as soon as you return. What time does your train leave?"

"There's a train at 10:15. I can make it."

It did not take long to draw up the necessary papers, and Dick was soon on his way back to Grafton with something over one hundred dollars in his pocket. To the credit man it was only a part of the day's work; but to Dick it meant life or death to his daily.

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CHAPTER XXXII

AMY DISCOVERS THE VIAL OF VISHNU



R. COMSTOCK awoke early on the following morning, and busied himself in becoming familiar with the establishment he had taken possession of so unexpectedly. Amy and Dixon arrived a little before seven o'clock. Dixon urged him to go up to the house for breakfast, saying that his mother insisted upon it.

"No, Ed. Call up your mother, and tell her I must be excused. Now, either you or I must stay here until Dick returns, or we hear from him. It's best not to take any chances. I've got a line-up on things. I see that Dick has left some copy on the hook, and I'll wait here until his foreman comes, and then go to the restaurant for breakfast. Amy, you'll have to act as city editor. I guess we can get enough news to fill up the paper, and get out some kind of a sheet. If what I've heard about that young reporter be true, your main duty will be to use the blue pencil. Hello, here's someone new," as

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the door opened and an elderly individual walked back to where they were standing.

"Oh, that's Stedman," said Dixon. "Good morning, Mr. Stedman. This is Mr. Comstock and Miss Comstock. Mr. Bevan is away, and Mr. Comstock and I are here to look after his interests until he returns."

"Glad to meet you. Of the Ripton Gazette, I believe?" And as Comstock nodded his head, Steadman continued, "Well, I'd sooner see you and the young lady in possession here than the sheriff. When did you see Mr. Bevan, Mr. Dixon?"

Dixon hesitated. While waiting for a reply Stedman hung up his hat and coat, put on his apron, and rolled up his sleeves. His head was tilted to one side, and there was a determined look on his face as Dixon made an evasive answer.

"Let's get down to brass tacks. It's no use to mince matters. If you know where Mr. Bevan is, you don't want to tell me. Now, I'm going to stick right here, and see to it that none of those politicians get him in bad or do him dirt. I've known him longer than anyone around here. He's been playing a losing game, but he's going to win out all right, and I'm going to help him do it. Now

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I want to know 'just how you stand. When will Bevan be back?"

Stedman had addressed himself to Comstock; who realized that he was a man who could be depended upon, and he unreservedly explained the situation to him.

"Now we understand one another. There's nothing like plain talk. Get the copy in, I'll see it's set up, and we'll get out some kind of a paper. We'll hold the fort until the boy gets back. But I think we'll hear from him before it's time to go to press. As I said before, I've known Dick longer than any of you, and take my word for it, he's a fighter."

While they had been talking, Amy had been busy with the paste pot and scissors, culling news items from the exchanges. Several of the other employees had arrived, and though they looked askance at the strangers, they went to work when they saw that Stedman took their presence as a matter of course. Stebbins was the only one who dared make any comment. After Comstock had gone out, he said to Stedman: "So we'll have a 'skirt' help us get out the paper today?"

"Well, what of it?"

"Oh, nothing; guess she'll do all right."

"Why, Miss Comstock! Good morning!"

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was Converse's greeting as he breezed in, with his hat pushed back on his head, and his curly forelock exposed. "Where's Mr. Bevan?"

"He's away today. I'm taking his place. What assignments had you last night?"

"Oh, he gave me a bunch of 'em. Two weddings, one recital and a concert. Then I picked up two deaths on the way to the office. I've got 'em all written up but the deaths," pulling a bunch of copy out of his pocket. "How's the hook? I'll give this to Stedman."

"I think I'd better look over it first. You can write up your deaths in the meantime," and Amy took the manuscript from his hand. "Mr. Converse," she said, after she had read several pages, "this wedding article is very prettily written, but who are the bride's parents? Or the groom's? Who was the minister? What does the groom do for a living? Are they going on a wedding trip? Where will they live when they return? I think we will leave out this list of presents, and you just give me these facts, and I'll fix it up."

"Why, everybody knows them, and they were married in the First Methodist Church, and of course the minister there officiated. I didn't know you wanted all of that in."

He finished writing up his "obits" and

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gaily sailed out of the door. Amy looked up as the door banged. "Poor Dick!" she mused.

Comstock did not return until nearly ten o'clock. There was a satisfied smile on his face, but he made no comment in regard to his long absence. Amy reported that the driver from the express company had called with the box of stereotype plates, but that he would not leave them until the C.O.D. had been paid. Dixon was about to leave to attend to some affairs at his office, when the driver returned, slapped the box down on the floor, announcing that the C.O.D. had been released.

"That means that Dick is in the city; don't you think so, father?" Both men noted the look of relief that overspread her face.

"It looks that way. We ought to hear from him soon. I guess Stedman can make up his inside form now, and fill up with whatever country correspondence he has set. I see that Dick always runs it first in the daily on Thursday. Hello, here's Simpson! Wonder what he's after?" as a burly, aggressive individual sidled through the doorway. "How are you, Frank? Haven't seen you since you was up to Ripton last fall, when you tried to make a levy on those show people. How's

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everything?" Comstock made a pretense of greeting him like a long-lost brother.

"All right," somewhat taken aback. "But I'm looking for Bevan. Is he in?"

"Not just now, but we expect him back soon. What can I do for you?" Drawing him to one side he inquired in a matter-of-fact tone of voice, "what kind of a paper have you got for him? I'll tell him when he comes in."

"Warrant for his arrest," so low that no one but Comstock could hear him. "Some dirty work, I think. Tell him to go over to Judge Kessner's court when he comes in," and then with a knowing wink, "I've some papers to serve across the river, and won't get back before one o'clock."

Before Comstock could report to Amy and Dixon this new development, there was another interruption. This time a messenger boy. "Telegram for Mr. Stedman. Is there a Stedman here?"

"Right here, sonny," and Stedman walked around the corner of the partition with a corn cob pipe in one hand, a package of tobacco in the other. After signing the book he deliberately filled his pipe, laying the yellow envelope on one of the desks.

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"Oh, I know that's from Dick!" exclaimed Amy in suppressed excitement. "Why don't you open it, Mr. Stedman?"

"In a minute. Lots of time," and not until he had lighted his pipe, and had it drawing to his satisfaction, did he pick up the telegram. After glancing at the contents, he handed it to Comstock, remarking unconcernedly, "Just what I was going to do anyway."

The telegram read; "Get out paper. Use country correspondence. Back before noon. Bevan." Stedman turned to his work. Amy drew a long sigh of relief. Comstock announced that he would go down to the depot to meet Dick, motioning Dixon to follow him. After they had closed the door behind them, Comstock told Dixon about the warrant, and it was arranged that Dixon was to go right over to the court room, and wait until Comstock should appear with Dick.

"I'll have the case continued, but I think that the court will insist that we give bonds. Meantime we will have a chance to get our breath."

"I'll go on his bond, and if they want anyone more than that, I think I have a few friends here in Grafton who will be satisfactory to the court. They're not going to lock

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the boy up until he's had a fair trial." And Comstock's jaws closed like a vise.

While walking up and down the depot platform waiting for the train, his attention was attracted by the cries of a newsboy: "Git yer 'xtra! Full 'count of th' suicide!" Noticing the name "Bevan" in big type he purchased a copy. It was an early edition of the News, and there in glaring headlines was the announcement:

EDITOR BEVAN HAS DISAPPEARED

SAID TO HAVE COMMITTED SUICIDE

**Dragging the River for Body—Desperate Financial
Condition Believed to be the Cause**

This was followed by a cleverly worded article implying that the Daily Independent would undoubtedly be suspended.

"The dirty hound!" exclaimed Comstock. "Anything to put him out of business so that Wolff can get the tax list. But it won't work."

Just then the train came in, and the first passenger to alight was Dick. Comstock lost no time in explaining matters to him as they hurried to Justice Kessner's court room. There it was learned that the complaint had been signed by Sayers, the city clerk. But-

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ler, who had run against Dixon for city attorney, represented Sayers. Dixon demanded a continuance of the case for ten days, but it was finally compromised by setting the day of trial for Wednesday of the following week. It took some time to fix the amount of the bonds. Butler had the temerity to demand that the bonds be for the sum of \$5,000, but Dixon ridiculed the idea. Finally the amount agreed upon was made \$1,000, and Mr. Comstock signed the bond.

Dick was agreeably surprised to find Amy at the Independent office when they returned. Leaving Converse in charge during the noon hour, the four sat down to dinner at the restaurant, and compared notes while eating. Dick explained his trip to the city, and how he had adjusted matters, after Amy and her father had explained their presence in Grafton. But it was Comstock who furnished the surprise. Pulling two sheets of paper out of his pocket, he handed them to Dixon.

"Will that cover all the points, Ed?" The phraseology may not be exactly legal, but I guess anyone can understand what is meant."

"They'll hold water all right," and Dixon handed the papers to Dick. "They'll be sore, though, when they find out that the Inde-

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dendent is going to continue, and has the tax list."

The papers were a surrender of all right, title or interest that the undersigned had in the Independent as a newspaper, or the Independent Publishing Company as a corporation, to Mr. Comstock, on condition that the undersigned should not be held liable for any debts that had been contracted, or any damage suits that might be instituted. One was signed by Sloan, and the other by Jackson.

"And the consideration?" asked Dick.

"None whatever. A good morning's work, I think. I'm going back on the one o'clock train, and see what the boys are doing. Amy, I guess you might as well make a day of it, and I'll tell mother that you'll be up on the seven o'clock train." Dick shook his hand warmly at parting, and his eyes were more eloquent than words.

Amy returned directly to the office, while Dick stopped at the bank to pay the note. Dixon said he would be in his office all the afternoon, and to let him know of any new developments. Of course the Independent refuted the statements made by the News. As Mark Twain once said, "the report of his death was greatly exaggerated."

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And Dick could not resist the temptation to refer to it as "that notoriously unreliable sheet masquerading as a newspaper."

The employees of the Independent office worked with feverish haste that Thursday afternoon to get the paper out on the street earlier than usual. The time for going to press was 3:45, but Dick consented to close the forms at 3:30. Dick and Amy were the only ones who acted in any way rational. Even Stedman told Dick that if he would say the word he would lead a mob over to the News office and "wreck the dirty sheet." All the newsboys had heard of the report of Dick's suicide, as published by the News, and were on hand earlier than usual. Stebbins was acting as city circulator, and he reported to Dick that the carriers wanted extra copies, and couldn't he run five hundred "overs" for them.

"Yes," was the answer. "Tell the boys if they sell them all right; if not they can give them out as sample copies."

During the day, Amy had been using a desk to the right of Dick's. All the afternoon she had been busy reading proof, editing Converse's copy, and the country correspondence that had arrived in the afternoon.

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As soon as the first copies of the daily were printed, Dick marked up his sheet for the semi-weekly. After he had handed it to Stedman, he sank wearily into the chair before his desk. Amy looked up from the pile of exchanges before her.

"Tired, aren't you, Dick?" And there was a compassionate look in her eyes.

"No, not really. But I always feel relieved when the paper has gone to press. Of course you know how that is with the weekly. But you've helped me a lot today, and last night I didn't know whether there would be any paper or not."

"I wish I could have helped you more. Of course I had a faint idea as to what should be done from what you told me, but getting out a daily is a little bit different than a weekly, or a semi-weekly."

"Yes, but it would be no trouble at all if I had your help every day, like I had today." Amy looked at him inquiringly. He had many times before thanked her for the assistance she had rendered with the court reports and the special articles she had written, but never before had he said that he would like to have her in the Independent office. While she was puzzling over what he meant, he had

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put his hand on hers, and as she looked down at it, he continued, more earnestly: "You know, Amy, you are to blame for starting the daily in the first place, and now that it is started, I think you ought to stay here to help me run it."

"But papa needs my help on the Gazette."

"Your father and Bill can spare you, and they will have to some time. Of course, I don't mean right away. Two months, say. That will be some time in June. That's always considered the best month, isn't it?"

"June," she repeated, "why June?"

"Oh, Amy, you know what I mean!" Her poor fingers ached from his ardent grip.

"I don't know what you mean when you say I am to blame for you starting the daily." He felt there was a provoking determination on her part not to understand him.

"Not to blame! Of course you were to blame. I'll show you!" Pushing in the slide, that was between them, he unlocked the upper drawer of his desk, pulling out a copy of the Gazette, he spread it out before her. Pointing to an item, he inquired:

"Now, didn't you write that?"

"No, I didn't write that!" playfully shaking her head after reading the item.

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"Well, your father didn't write it, or Bill or George. So who did?"

"It never was written," laughing at Dick's puzzled expression. "I just set it up, and dumped it on the galley. I thought you were going to prove that I was to blame for starting the daily, Mr. Adam?"

"Well, after that item was published, all the papers copied it, the politicians urged me on, then you gave me that be-a-u-tiful fountain pen especially to write the 'Salutatory', so there seemed nothing to do but to go ahead and start it!" They both laughed.

"Why, Dick! When you were up to the county fair, you said that you intended to make the Independent a daily, and I just put it in as a news item. Why did you say you was going to make it a daily if you didn't mean it?"

"Well," somewhat shamefacedly, "I was attracted to you the first time I saw you, and when we got to talking on our way to the fair grounds, I wanted you to think I was 'some pumpkins,' as Uncle John says, so I talked big about the daily I truly meant to start some day. But Amy, can't I make you understand? I love you"—and it seemed to the startled Amy that he intended to take

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her in his arms before the whole office force.

"Good gracious, Dick! I think Mr. Stedman wants to see you. He is looking over this way." Dick was seated facing Amy, so his back was to the rest of the establishment. He swung around in his chair, and went back to see what was wanted, impatient at the interruption. Amy looked down at the copy of the Gazette Dick had preserved so carefully, and wondering if there might be other articles treasured by Dick, she glanced into the open drawer.

Reposing snugly in the front left corner was a familiar-looking object, and when Dick returned she was gazing at it as if hypnotized.

"Whatever are you looking at, Amy?"

"My Vial of Vishnu!" exclaimed Amy, in awe-struck tones, as she pointed with her finger. "Where did you get it? How did it come here?"

"Your what?" and Dick looked puzzled.

"That—that Vial—it's my Vial of Vishnu" as she reached over and took it in her hands.

"Oh, that thing? Jim left that here Monday. It was in the pocket of the suit that he left here for me to have cleaned for him."

"Jim! You mean Jim Goodman?"

"Yes. But why do you think it is yours?"

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Did you give it to him? Did you know him before I sent him up there?" But instead of answering, Amy removed the stopper from the Vial. Using a new pen, she traced her name on the margin of one of the exchanges. After waiting for the liquid to dry, she lit a match, and held the apparently blank sheet of paper over the flame. As the writing appeared on the strip of paper, she exclaimed:

"There! I believed it was my Vial of Vishnu, and that proves it. But how did it get here?" She excitedly explained how it had been given to her by the Hindoo; how they had used it at Alice's party; that Edith had "borrowed" it, and that she supposed it was now in Mayor Renard's possession. "But," she concluded, "how did Jim get it?"

Dick had been keenly interested in Amy's experiments, and when the writing appeared on the paper, the possibility of its being used for illegal purposes flashed through his mind.

"Amy, Jim worked at the News office Friday and Saturday. He worked on the ballots, he told me. Wolff has been Renard's right hand man in this campaign. Could—" Taking the Vial from her hand, he traced a couple of crosses on a piece of paper, and held it over the flame as Amy had done. "I

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believe that," pointing to the Vial of Vishnu, "is the blue nigger in the woodpile. We must see Jim immediately."

"Why, Dick, they never would dare!" Before he could reply, the telephone rang.

"Yes, Dixon—'All quiet on the Potomac'—No, I'm not worrying—Oh, the defense?—That's your trouble, what have I got a lawyer for?—[laughing]—Might as well laugh as cry. You know, Ed, that don't come up until Wednesday—Yes, I'm going up to Ripton with her, and you'd better meet us at the depot and go along—The six o'clock train—Yes; new developments—We'll tell you on the train—Meet you at the depot."

Turning to Amy, he grabbed the file from her desk. "Run through the file and see what day it was we published the list of election judges and clerks; then get a couple of copies of that day's paper. I'll tell Stedman what I want done while I'm gone. He's got to run the semi-weekly tonight, and we'll mail it in the morning."

As the train sped toward Ripton the three discussed the situation thoroughly.

"It's all circumstantial evidence, Dick. But we'll lay the case before the state's attorney, and he'll have to act in the matter."

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CHAPTER XXXIII

WASHBURNE'S SENSE OF DUTY



ELL, dad, we're ready to close up the forms," was Bill's greeting, when Comstock entered the Gazette office. "If there are any more parting words let's have 'em."

"Just a couple of stickfulls, double leaded, Will, and I'll write it up at once. We'll give it a three-line head, and you leave space at the head of the column on the first page," and he showed Bill the copy of the News which he had brought with him.

"The dirty whelp!" muttered Bill. "Dad, I'd like to run a red line over the top of the paper. But we haven't time. We'll close her up at four o'clock, and get the local copies into the postoffice before six o'clock. We'll get a scoop on Dick this time," and he set to work on the heading.

The citizens of Ripton were surprised to receive their copies of the paper so early. Usually they were deposited in the postoffice too late for Thursday night delivery; the out-of-town subscriptions being mailed first.

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George had fed the press, Jim and Bill had folded, while Alice and Edith had assisted Mr. Comstock in the mailing.

"There," said Alice, after George had gone to the postoffice with the bag of mail, "there's nothing but the out-of-town list to do after supper, and we'll be back early, Mr. Comstock, and help finish it up. Then we'll see Amy when she gets home."

As the girls were returning to the Gazette office, they met Washburne on the street.

"Where are you girls going?"

"What's that to you, Joe Washburne?" was Alice's saucy inquiry. "Little you care about us. We haven't seen hide or hair of you since Sunday night. Where have you been keeping yourself, I'd like to know?"

"I've been busy. I've worked every night this week. The grand jury has been in session, and we want to get everything cleaned up this week. I'd be working tonight, but they adjourned this afternoon until Saturday. I can finish drawing up the indictments tomorrow, so that they can vote on them Saturday. But you didn't answer my question. I was coming up to the house to see grandma this evening."

"We're going to work," and there was a

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gaiety in Edith's voice that nettled Washburne. "We're too busy for social affairs, aren't we, Alice?"

"Oh, he can come along if he wants to, if he promises not to disturb us too much. We might make you useful. We have no room for ornaments, though—understand that!"

"Really, I'm very grateful for your consideration!" Washburne bowed to his cousin in mock solemnity. Nevertheless, he accompanied them to the Gazette office.

The men had returned from supper when the girls arrived, and they lost no time in getting down to work. Washburne idly stood around for a few minutes, but after Alice had made a few sarcastic remarks about "ornaments", he took off his coat, and tried to make himself useful. Comstock made a number of inquiries in regard to the cases which had been brought before the grand jury, and its possible action on Saturday. Washburne had answered with more or less importance, and, as Alice said, in such a way as to "strike her funny bump." Edith was considerably impressed, as Washburne evidently intended she should be. Finally Alice broke into the discussion. Waving the paste brush high in the air, she shouted:

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"Listen to our Patrick Henry! Isn't he grand? All hail the Lord High Executioner."

"My object all sublime,
Which I'll achieve in time,
Is to make the punishment fit the crime,
The punishment fit the crime."

Washburne made a move toward her, but she was too quick for him, and ran to the other side of the table. He made an effort to climb over the table after her.

"Joe Washburne, if you come near me, I'll give you a swat with this paste brush, and that pretty tie you bought this morning won't be worth two cents."

In the midst of the diversion the door opened and Amy, accompanied by Dick and Dixon, entered.

"Well, look who's here!" exclaimed Alice. "Who said they'd eloped? Oh, Amy, we're almost through—Joe's been such a splendid help, hasn't he. Edith?" and then in an aside, "with his mouth, I mean."

Amy immediately took off her hat and coat and went to work to assist the girls. Dixon drew Washburne to one side, and Dick beckoned Comstock to follow him back to the pressroom. Bill was taking the rollers out of the press, and Jim was washing off the form in the sink.

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"Hello, old man! Come up to see if I'd found the place? Oh, I found it all right, all right, and it ain't a bad dump, either. Shake!" And he transferred the lye brush to his left hand, extending his grimy right, which Dick grasped above the wrist.

"No, I knew you were here, Jim. I came up on another matter." Jim had rinsed off the form, and was about to lift it out of the sink, when Dick produced the Vial of Vishnu from his pocket. "Jim, where did you get this?"

"Why, I picked that up at the News office. You found it in the suit I left to be cleaned? I just swiped it for luck. Why, what's the matter?" looking at their sober faces with a puzzled expression. "What is it? Is that a fly mug over there?" indicating Dixon, who was earnestly talking to Washburne. As he spoke they had started to come over to the press room.

"Find out anything?" asked Dixon.

"He found it in the News office," answered Dick, significantly.

Washburne glanced over to where the girls were working. They were tossing the last packages into the mail bag.

"The girls are through. I think I'll take

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Alice and Miss Renard home; and then come back here. The less publicity just now the better."

"I wonder what's up now?" queried Jim to Bill, as the others walked away. And he started to lift the form from the sink. "Believe me, I'm so weak in the knees that I can't lift her."

"I'll put it on the stone. But what's the matter with you? What was that bottle that Dick had in his hand, anyway?" Bill was as mystified as Jim. Washburne, Alice and Edith were just going out of the door, and Bill was looking after them inquiringly.

"It's the 'Jinx', Bill. Now I've got it! I've got it now!" He clutched Bill's arm in such a way that Bill nearly "pied" the form he was lifting onto the stone.

"Where's that paper the kid had yesterday with the pictures in?" He made a rush over to the type case where George had been working the day before. Making a most frantic search, he finally found the paper tucked under the type case. Dick, with Amy, Dixon and Comstock intently watching him, had the Vial in his hand and was showing them how it was possible to mark the ballot so that the voter would be defrauded of his

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right to a voice in the government of the community.

"That's the guy, Dick!" exclaimed Jim, slapping the paper down before him as Dick extinguished the match, and passed the sheet of paper to the others to examine. "He and his royal nobs were in the News office Sunday night, and they were doing something to the ballots. And the next morning I found the 'Jinx' there on the table right near the pile of ballots."

Amy and the three men jumped from their chairs as if a thunderbolt had struck the building.

"Could you swear to that?" asked Dixon.

"I could now, all right, all right; but I couldn't Monday morning," grinning expressively. He then explained how he spent the Sunday in Grafton, his return to the News office, his falling asleep, and then awakening to find Wolff and Renard there. His determination to watch them, and then remembering no more until he awoke the following morning.

"Jim, can you remember anything they said?" asked Dick, excitedly. "Was there any conversation?"

"Let me see," and he scratched his ear

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meditatively. "Yes, one said something about 'twenty being enough', and the other said he was 'going to make it forty', and then his royal nobs said they 'had better be going', and that's all I remember." After being plied with questions by Comstock, Dixon and Dick, Jim explained his counting over the number of ballots in each pile, the next morning, and finding the count to be one hundred in each pile, as they were the night before.

It did not take them long to explain everything to Washburne on his return, and after carefully going over the evidence, and the election reports which Dick had published, he sat thinking for about five minutes, turning the Vial around and around in his hand. The others sat silently watching him. He had a way of impressing everyone he came in contact with, excepting Alice and his grandma. They all knew that he was thinking of Edith, and the disgrace this would bring to her father. How much would that affect his course of action? Would he be true to his oath of office? Would "blood tell?"

"Dixon," he said finally, "you and Mr. Bevan had better file a petition for a recount at once—tomorrow—before they canvass the returns. I'll have the clerk of the court issue

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subpœnaes for every election judge and clerk who served at that election; also for Wolff, because he printed the ballots; his foreman, pressman and City Clerk Sayers. I'll have these served tomorrow, and we'll bring it before the grand jury Saturday. We'll sift this thing to the bottom. It's all circumstantial evidence, but someone may squeal, and turn state's evidence."

Washburne took possession of the Vial, and Dixon went with him to his office in the county building, having volunteered his assistance in setting the machinery of the law in operation.

Amy and Dick sat down to a late supper in the Comstock home, and the rest of the family retired, leaving them alone in the dining room. As they were parting for the night Dick took Amy's hand, and asked:

"And it will be in June, Amy?"

"Dick, I don't think you have been just fair. Why didn't you tell us you needed money so badly? Father would have helped you, and I've saved a little money myself."

"Amy, I knew that. But I just had to get out of this quagmire myself. I never have dared to tell you how much I loved you before, until I could see a reasonable chance

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of making good with the daily. But I need you, dear heart. I believe that we belong to each other. Don't you?"

"I've known that for a long time, boy." She eluded his grasp, and rushed to her room.

Dick planned to return to Grafton on the early train, which arrived there about seven o'clock. Mrs. Comstock said she would have breakfast for him, but he had objected, saying that he would have breakfast in Grafton. Amy had planned otherwise, and when he came down stairs, she stood by the dining room door, blushing becomingly.

"I've a cup of coffee ready for you, Dick. Sit right down here. You've plenty of time."

"I surely will, and"—clasping her tightly, "this is like it will be every day, after June."

Amy made a pretense of struggling to free herself, and when she could speak, she said:

"Dick, don't be foolish; sit down now and eat some breakfast." When he departed, he claimed a parting token.

"And I can ask your father tomorrow?" he called from the foot of the stairs. Amy nodded, and pressed her fingers to her lips. At the corner of the street Dick turned. Amy was still standing in the doorway, and waved her hand in farewell.

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CHAPTER XXXIV

THE VIAL AND THE GRAND JURY



STANDING room was at a premium on the train that arrived in Ripton on the Saturday morning following the election. In addition to the regular quota of lawyers constantly traveling to the county seat, there were over one hundred judges and clerks from the various voting precincts. On Friday evening the Independent had announced that the grand jury was to investigate the Grafton election, but the extent of the inquiry was not realized until late in the evening when it was discovered how many men had been subpoenaed. Nearly every lawyer, politician, or would-be politician, as well as many curiosity-seekers, had boarded the train for Ripton.

When Renard heard that Wolff and Sayers had been summoned, he immediately arranged for Butler to accompany them, and that the four make the trip in his automobile, hoping to arrive before the train.

Washburne had cautioned the Comstock

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family, as well as Dick, Dixon and Jim, not to divulge the nature of the evidence, or their suspicions as to the guilty individuals. The Conrad household, because of the News article and Dick's interest in the matter, jumped to the conclusion that Wolff was the guilty party, and that Renard was innocent of any part in the fraud. Edith's testimony before the grand jury was absolutely essential, but to ask her to give testimony that might send her father to the penitentiary was more than Washburne believed a man should be called upon to do. But there was his oath of office, and he remembered her words on the day they visited the sugar camp—her belief that he would punish a criminal "even if it were your own brother." When he called at the Conrad home Friday night, determined to tell Edith he wished her to appear before the grand jury, he was much relieved when he discovered that they all thought Wolff to be the guilty one. Edith expressed the belief that Wolff was the one who had "spoiled her party," and "she never had liked him, but had been courteous to him for papa's sake."

Washburne did not disillusion them, but simply told Edith that he wished her to meet

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Amy at his office in the county building at nine o'clock the following morning.

The grand jury had planned to meet at nine o'clock, Washburne having promised to have all the papers in readiness, so that they could pass on the cases they had heard without delay, finish up their work by noon, and adjourn for the term. They were considerably surprised to find that this plan had been changed, and that they were to investigate certain suspicious circumstances in connection with the election in Grafton.

Jim and Amy had given their testimony, and Edith had just been escorted into the jury room when the crowd from Grafton swarmed into the corridors of the county building. Washburne questioned her as to her acquaintance with Wolff, and his association with her father. Then he had her tell about the party at Alice's home, and the fortune telling. At first Edith gave short, nervous answers. It certainly was disconcerting to have all those eyes centered on one's person, and the same number of ears listening intently to every word one utters. But Washburne's apparently easy way of asking the questions reassured her. When he saw that she was more at ease he produced

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the Vial of Vishnu, and not knowing the drift of the questions, she told the jury that her father had asked her to leave the Vial with him for safe keeping. As soon as Washburne had obtained this admission, he told her that would be all. Several members of the jury were eager to ask more questions, but Washburne adroitly waved them aside, and escorted Edith to the corridor, having previously instructed the bailiff to call Wolff as the next witness.

There was less than a score of people in the corridors when Edith had entered the jury room, but now the crowd was so dense that she had difficulty in making her way to Amy's side. The party in Renard's automobile had found the roads in bad condition, and had arrived at the same time as the train. They had hurried to the court house, and were grouped near the jury room door as Edith came out. Wolff had attempted to speak to her, but the bailiff had pushed him into the jury room.

"Why, there's your daughter, George!" exclaimed Sayers. "What's she doing in the grand jury room?"

"What d——d outrage is this, I'd like to know?" and Renard excitedly forced his way

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through the crowd to Edith's side, closely followed by his party. "Edith, what were you doing in the grand jury room?"

"Why, papa!" was the surprised exclamation, putting her arms around his neck, and kissing his cheek.

"But what were you doing in that room?"

Edith innocently told him that they just wanted to know about Alice's party, and the fortune telling, and her "borrowing" the Vial, and giving it to him to take care of. "And papa," she concluded, "they were so interested! They have the Vial in there now. I can't understand it. I thought you were going to take care of it for me."

"My God!" exclaimed Renard. His body gave a curious twist to the left side, and he fell, a crumpled heap, into Sayers' arms, pulling him down to the marble floor.

"Oh, papa, papa!" and Edith fell on her knees beside him.

"He is dead!" announced the county physician, who happened to be in the county clerk's office, and had been immediately summoned. "It's a case for the coroner, now." He turned his attention to Edith. "We must get her out of here. Take her home at once." and partly carrying her, they put the dazed

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girl into the Renard automobile, and told the chauffer to take them to the Conrad home.

When Wolff emerged from the jury room, they were carrying Renard's body to the undertaking establishment, and the coroner had impaneled a jury. Sayers had been called as the next witness, and Butler said that he would wait until he had given his testimony. When Wolff reached the street the Renard car had just returned. Jumping in, he told the chauffer to drive to the undertakers'. As the machine stopped before the door, Wolff did not get out. The short ride had given him a chance to think.

"Never mind waiting for the others," he said, hurriedly. "Drive back to Grafton, and never mind the speed limit, James. I must look after some business for Mr. Renard, and I must be at the bank before noon."

The jury proceeded with its investigations. In the afternoon the court ordered that the ballot boxes be delivered to them Monday morning, and that they should be opened, and the marks on the ballots subjected to a microscopic and chemical examination. Late Saturday night they adjourned to Monday. They convened early Monday, and at noon instructed the state's attorney

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to put Wolff under arrest. Officers were dispatched to Grafton at once, but Wolff could not be found. It was discovered that immediately upon his return to Grafton Saturday, he had interviewed Ross at the bank, had informed him of Renard's death, and that there were some matters in the metropolis that should be attended to. He did not go into details, but gave Ross to understand that it was in connection with the consolidation scheme. He must leave on the one o'clock train, and take with him at least \$20,000. Ross was completely carried off his feet, and turned over the money to Wolff, accepting his note, secured by the Street Railway Company's stock, and Wolff's stock in the News, which he obtained from the safety deposit vaults in the basement of the bank. At the hotel where he lived he told the clerk he would be back that evening.

Sunday afternoon Ross became suspicious, and telegraphed to a private detective agency in the city, and Monday morning he was informed that they had traced him to Detroit. Late in the summer a citizen of Grafton told Ross that he had seen him at a summer resort in Canada. He had spoken to him, but Wolff pretended not to know him.

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CHAPTER XXXV

AMY'S SCRAPBOOK



ND what do you want the paste for?"

Dick asked Amy, as they were seated in the large living room of their bungalow, one evening in July.

"Oh, I want to fix up my scrapbook. Do you know I haven't done anything to it for ever so long. Not since we started on the tax list."

"Scrapbook! Do people keep scrapbooks in this day and age?"

"Not everybody. But I always have. It is my 'onlyest own' scrapbook I want to fix up tonight. You can help me if you like. You know an 'onlyest own' scrapbook is one in which you only put items about people you know, or about yourself, and things like that. I started this when I went to school in Grafton. Didn't I ever show it to you?"

"No." Dick realized that he was just beginning to get acquainted with Amy.

"Well, here it is," and she showed him a book, stamped "The Girl Graduate," filled

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with newspaper clippings of all kinds. Parties, receptions, deaths, marriages and births, all arranged in chronological order. There were samples of dress goods, bits of lace, a dance program, each with a notation underneath. "And now I have all these arranged in order, and you can trim them for me."

"When did you paste this item in your book, Amy?" pointing to one clipped from the Gazette during county fair week.

"Oh, a long time ago, Dicky boy. Here are the scissors, and I'll paste."

"Here is an item about Mr. Conrad and Ed Dixon being appointed administrators for the Renard estate. He left no will."

"Yes, that should go in here along with this item about Mrs. Eaton going back to England. I'll never forget her coming up to Ripton to bid Edith goodby, and saying she'd been so 'throng' she couldn't come before. She met Joe Washburne at Conrad's, and told Edith she thought 'her solicitor looked like a prince of the blood she once saw at Halifax.' Here's a two-column account of Renard's funeral. We can put them all on the same page. Mrs. Eaton couldn't understand why they didn't have the soldiers marching in the procession. They always did at home when

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they buried a lord mayor. It was too bad Edith couldn't have attended her father's funeral. As it was, Mrs. Eaton was chief mourner."

"Well, it was the respect the citizens were paying to his position as mayor, that the business houses were all closed that day," was Dick's comment. "You've got that page full. What about these items about the new election, the mass meeting at the Opera house, and the election of Ed Dixon for mayor?"

"We'll start a new page with those. Oh, Dick, I was as proud as a peacock when they wanted you to be mayor, and I almost wished you had accepted. I never told you what papa said when he heard that you wouldn't."

"No; what did he say?"

"I ought not to tell you, but he said that you were beginning to have some sense, and there were hopes for you."

"Well, dad is right. He knew that we were soon going to consolidate the two papers, and he always said that a newspaper publisher or editor should never accept any office. That he can serve the public better when he doesn't wear any man's collar. I see you have my last editorial in the Independent, and the first one in the Independent-News,

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and then here's all that grand jury report, the indictment of Wolff, and the note that the jury believed Renard just as guilty. You won't have room."

"Some of those we will have to leave out. Especially that about Edith's father. She may see this book some time, and everyone has kept that away from her. This item about the Renard homestead being turned into a hospital, and being called the Lydia Bristol Hospital. I think we can find room for that on the same page with the Renard funeral. My, I nearly pasted that item about Grandma Washburne's birthday party on that page. That would never do. If grandma saw that she would tear the book to pieces. She never could see any good in Edith's father, and when she heard he was dead, she said it was 'a good riddance.' But she thinks the world of Edith now. She always refers to her as 'Lydia Bristol's daughter'."

"Here's the report of our wedding, and the clippings from the different exchanges. You're not going to leave any of those out, are you, Amy?"

"I should say not!" And picking up the report from the Gazette, she laughed and

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cried in turn. "I can't help it, Dick. So much fun over that report. You remember that we all took a hand in writing it. Alice, Edith, papa, Will, George, you and even Jim had a say in it."

"Yes, and then Ma Comstock said we didn't begin to tell what a pretty wedding it was."

"There now! That just leaves the last page for our return from the wedding trip, and the house warming; when we sealed up the Vial of Vishnu over the fireplace."

Amy carefully looked over the newspaper clippings that were left.

"These we'll burn, and that's all that is left. This one about Jim and his prize chickens will go in here. That one will be the last in the book."

A portion of the clipping which she had reference to, read:

"Vishnu is the preserving power of the divine spirit. Some allege that Vishnu is the paramount god because there is nothing distinctive in the act of annihilation, but only a cessation of preservation. Vishnu is himself represented as a dark blue man, with four arms, the first holding a war club, the second a conch shell, the third a quoit-like weapon called Chakra, and the fourth a

THE VIAL OF VISHNU.

water lily. His mark is a trident, with a yellow fork in the center, and a white one on each side."

"Then he is the god of preservation?"

"Yes, Dicky boy; and do you know I somehow fancy he is the printer's god. You and Will have always boasted that printing was the "Art Preservative of All Arts."

"Maybe he is, Amy. But we've got him where he will stay for awhile." He turned toward the fire-place. "You remember Jim said he hoped he would 'stay put' now." Have you any more clippings?"

"No more for this book, Dicky boy."

